HOLIDAY WEEK NUMBER.

SHORT STORIES

No. 753.] Week ending June 6th. 1903. [Price One Penny.

GLANCING FEARFULLY ROUND, LADY MAITLAND HURRIEDLY TOOK

"My system is sound"

"I HAVE built up one of the Largest Concerns in the World on my original System of Business. I employ close upon 3,000 people in my Offices and Warehouses here in Sheffield. I receive and execute every week from ten to fifteen thousand orders. Every one of the millions of transactions recorded since I founded the Business (and the System) sixteen years ago, has been carried out on the distinct understanding that if the goods when received and critically examined are not considered completely satisfactory, the intending purchaser is to return them and the transaction is at an end. This promise fully and completely protects you. You may order in perfect confidence: I will take the whole risk of the goods giving entire satisfaction, and if you decide against purchasing after inspection has been made, merely send the package back and no remarks will be made."

My Terms are Advantageous. Any purchase may be made by Easy Monthly Instalments after the goods are delivered and approved of. Or, if you prefer to pay in one amount after approval, you will be entitled to select a Handsome Bonus Present from the Illustrated List sent with Invoice.

Each Departmental Catalogue is sent Post Free on application, together with Order Form and full particulars.

1. **WATCHES.** All my well-known Watch Specialities fully illustrated and described. My Watch Department is the Largest Watch-Sales concern in the World.
2. **TOOLS AND MACHINERY.** Thousands of illustrations. Every known Tool and Machine is supplied on Easy Terms of Payment.
3. **FURNITURE.** Every Furnishing requirement is illustrated. My System of Furnishing by Easy Instalments is fully explained.
4. **MANTLES AND COSTUMES.** A beautiful Album of the Fashions of the Season.
5. **GENT'S TAILORING.** This Stylish Department is splendidly equipped, and is probably the Largest Clothing Business in Great Britain.
6. **BOOTS AND SHOES.** Beautifully illustrated. A Splendid choice of the Newest Ideas in Foot Wear. *Contractor to His Majesty's Government.*
7. **BOOKSELLING DEPARTMENT.** Catalogue describes a vast assortment of Standard and Current Literature.
8. **SHEFFIELD CUTLERY & PLATE.** The produce of my own Factories illustrated and fully described. *Hotel and Shipping Orders a Speciality.*
9. **GLASS, CHINA, LAMPS, & STOVES.** Dinner and Tea Services, Toilet and Bedroom Ware, Lamps, Stoves, &c.
10. **CLOCKS.** Every known style and make supplied on Easy Terms of Payment.
11. **GENERAL DRAPERIES, etc.** Dress Goods, Blankets, Sheets, Furs, Ladies' Outfitting, Babies' and Children's Clothing, etc.
12. **GOLD JEWELLERY & DIAMONDS.** Engagement and Wedding Rings, Bracelets, Brooches, and all kinds of Gold Ornaments, fully illustrated & described.
13. **GENERAL FANCY GOODS.** Bags, Umbrellas, Albums, every kind of Leather Goods for Wedding Presents and Home Use.
14. **CAMERAS AND OPTICAL GOODS.** Hundreds of Designs by the most reliable makers.
15. **BICYCLES.** Exclusive Designs for the present season supplied on Easy Payment Terms.
16. **MUSICAL DEPARTMENT.** Pianos, Organs, and every known Musical Instrument supplied on Easy Payment Terms.
17. **ARMY AND NAVY.** A Catalogue representing all kinds of Goods required by all grades of both branches of the Service.
18. **COLONIAL DEPARTMENT.** A comprehensive illustrated Book which deals with the requirements of customers abroad, and quotes Special Cash Discount for Shipping Orders.

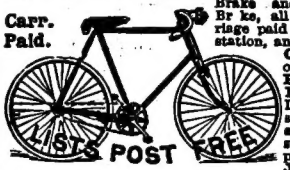
Mention Number of Catalogue required

An AGENCY for my firm is a very remunerative way of using spare time to advantage. Write for Agency particulars.

J. G. Graves, 69 DIVISION ST., SHEFFIELD.

JUNO CYCLES ARE THE VERY BEST.

Model A is fitted with Free Wheel, Bowden and Front Rim Brake or New Departure, Back Pedal Coaster Hub Brake and Front Rim Brake, all Fittings. Carriage paid to any railway station, and the price for Cash is £8 8 0, or 12 Monthly Payments of 15/10 each. Lady's Machine same price. All Cyclist needs supplied at lowest prices. 25 patterns Juno Cycles.



Trailers from £5 5 0, or 10 6 monthly. Write for New Season List, 136 pages and 600 illustrations, sent post free. —JUNO CYCLE CO. ("S.S." Dept.), 75 Bishopsgate Street Without, London, E.C. West End Showrooms: Piccadilly Circus, London, W.

DON'T LET MOTHS RUIN YOUR FURS OR BLANKETS

KEATING'S POWDER PRESERVES THEM.

KILLS BLACKBEETLES & FLEAS

Tins 3d., 6d. & 1/-

SENT ON APPROVAL

Ten Days Free Trial is allowed on every cycle we sell and the full price with all carriage charges refunded if unsatisfactory. 1903 Models

£3.10 to £6.10

New Departure Coaster Brake Front Rim Brake and highest grade genuine British made fittings and accessories.

200 Good Second-Hand Cycles £1.10 to £2.10

Don't Fail to get our big illustrated catalogue before deciding on your 1903 machine. We save you money.

Rider Agents Wanted in every district to buy sample at *special price* and take orders for us. Large profits easily made in spare time. Address Dept. 440,

MEAD CYCLE CO. Liverpool.

Below is Our Great New Serial.

SHORT STORIES

No. 753.] Week Ending June 6th, 1903. [One Penny.

THE BOND BETWEEN.

A Romance of Real Life.

By BLANCHE EARDLEY.

PROLOGUE.

"Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder." The sacred words were droned in monotonous tones by a lean, apathetic curate. The church is empty save for the two principals—Margaret Heath and Vernon Grant—and the necessary witnesses. After the ceremony, the bride and bridegroom leave for Paris.

Digby Scarlett turns over his letters leisurely in the interim between breakfast and sorting a cigar.

"Ah, here's one from my friend and collaborator, the valiant Vernon. I wonder what the Paris postmark means? Any way, it can wait until I have written to ask the adorable Margaret Heath to be my wife."

This done, he opens Vernon's letter, and when he reads the news of the latter's marriage to the girl to whom he has just penned a proposal, he murmurs—

"Twice hit by the same hand, and both blows destined to die with me—to bleed internally. Not bad for a man intellectually my inferior! But the third blow *I* shall get in. My innings begins to-day." Then he leaves for Paris to join the happy couple at their invitation.

Scarlett and Grant at one time had practised copying each other's signatures, and Grant had been very successful in his imitations of that of his friend. Now Scarlett persuades him, for a bet, to sign his name to a cheque for a large amount, promising to make it all right at the bank when presented. This, however, he fails to do, and Grant is arrested and sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude for forgery, Scarlett not even saying a word in his defence. Mrs. Grant goes to the prison to bid her husband farewell, and tells him that she will never have anything more to do with him.

The First Chapters.

It is the birthday of Lady Maitland, the young second wife of Sir Trevor Maitland, of Maitland Manor. As a birthday gift her husband says that he has decided to give her a daughter—at present she has an only son, Woolf—by adopting a girl, Ivy Strange, who had been discovered in the grounds some fourteen years before, and brought up with Muriel, the baronet's younger daughter. Jack Maitland, Sir Trevor's elder son, is in love with Ivy.

Lady Maitland does not take very kindly to the proposal; then Sir Trevor says that he is expecting a visitor to dinner, in the person of Heriot North, an old friend of the family, who is coming to pay his addresses to Agnes, Sir Trevor's elder daughter.

All rights reserved.]

Outside the library door Lady Maitland stops and grips the banister with one white hand.

"It shall not be!" she mutters. "I will see no beggar brat sharing my son's fortune. I wish I had insisted on the girl going to the workhouse when she was first found! Woolf has been cheated of becoming the heir because of his step-brother, but he shall not also be cheated of his money! I must get the girl out of the way, but how?"

When North is introduced to Agnes it is evident that he is terribly disappointed in her. During dinner he mentions a forgery case which was tried eighteen years before, and describes the wife of the prisoner.

Lady Maitland utters a stifled cry.

"The—heat," she falters; then suddenly Heriot North springs to his feet in time to catch her in his arms.

Sir Trevor Maitland's wife has fainted.

When Lady Maitland goes up to her room to dress for dinner the following day she finds a man in her room—evidently a burglar. He is gazing at two photographs in a locket as she enters.

"Who are you?" she says sharply. "What are you doing here? I am Lady Maitland, and my husband is the Chief Constable of Melton. If you don't explain your presence I shall immediately ring for help."

"Now you 'ave introduced yourself, my lady, let me do the same. I am Mike Holland, ex-convict, and follow-worker on the bog-land of Dartmoor with the *gentleman* in this 'ere locket along with yourself. 'E left before me, on license, and we all knew that his lovely missis would 'ave nothing to do with 'im when 'e got 'is lagging, but I didn't know as I was to meet the lady under *another* name!

"I shall want to be paid for holding my tongue. Bigamy is an ugly charge to have made against one. I am an old gaol bird—quod is nothing to me—but your ladyship would find it difficult to swallow. Now will you give me in charge?"

Lady Maitland is just about to pull the bell when she hears Woolf's voice outside. She must preserve her son's good name at any price! She turns savagely on Holland, her motherhood up in arms for the boy outside.

"Hide in there!" she breathes hoarsely, pointing to the deep oak wardrobe. "I accept—silence!" The man obeys her, Woolf enters the room, and he and his mother start downstairs together. Lady Maitland goes back for a moment to turn the key in the wardrobe door.

Three hours later she is again in her room. Tremblingly she flings open the wardrobe door to find it—empty.

Digitized by Google

THE BOND BETWEEN.

FIFTH CHAPTER.

Lady Maitland Scores.

"Father, I want you to give me your consent to marry Ivy! Of course, not now, but, say, in a year or two. We are both young, and Time will soon fly."

Had a bomb been exploded outside the study window, Sir Trevor Maitland could not have been more taken aback. That his son and heir should feel anything more than a brotherly affection for the homeless girl whom he had adopted in a moment of philanthropic impulse had never occurred to him. They had grown up as children together, and Sir Trevor Maitland had not relinquished his hope of formal adoption regarding the lovely foundling. But Jack's speech showed him a new difficulty in the way, to say nothing of his wife's aversion to the idea.

"This is very sudden, my boy," he said slowly, pushing back his chair and gazing at his son gravely. "Is it not an impulse, a youthful infatuation for Ivy's beauty? Remember, dear as the girl has become to me in all these years, it is a serious matter to allow a stray child of fortune to step into your mother's place one day. The future Lady Maitland should have a name and position as assured and open as your own; you owe your family some consideration, Jack, before entertaining such a sentiment as marriage towards the poor child."

Jack Maitland's handsome, boyish face flushed and then paled, as he listened to his father's calm, judicious reasoning. But his voice was just as resolute when he replied quickly:

"You mistake me, father. Ivy herself refuses to let me speak to her of marriage until she learns the mystery of her birth. And her pride is just as strong as yours. You have only to look at her, dad, to see that there is no common blood in her. Why," he went on passionately, "she looks just as much a lady as our step-mother herself!"

Sir Trevor Maitland stiffened. "Your step-mother is a woman of irreproachable birth, Jack. Poor little Ivy is—what?"

"At present, just the one girl I love, father!" he said bravely. "But don't be afraid," he added hastily, "I shall do nothing rash or that will make you ashamed. Surely my coming to you now proves that I desire to be thoroughly open, and straightforward? Ivy and I have agreed to let matters remain as they are until I have found out who her father was and where her mother is; for she persists in believing that her mother is still alive!"

Sir Trevor shook his head sadly. "Fourteen years is a long time, Jack, my boy. And whoever the parents may be—whether well-born or obscure—there is no getting away from the fact that it was a case of intentional desertion."

"I know there are difficulties in the way, sir," Jack answered steadily. "But in unravelling this mystery I shall all the sooner win my wife."

A shadow stood in the doorway, causing both men to turn their heads, and Lady Maitland slowly came forward. She was looking exquisitely fragile, and faint rings round her violet eyes lent her an air of languor. In the bosom of her white cloth dress there were a couple of golden red leaves.

She looked keenly at the two faces before her as she sank gracefully into a chair.

"What is this solemn conclave I have disturbed?" she laughed softly. "I heard something about 'mysteries' and 'wives'—two terms that have become synonymous!"

Sir Trevor gazed at her proudly. "There is not much mystery about you, my dear!"

Lady Maitland laughed merrily. "Middle-aged women can never claim mystery, Trevor! But I have not heard yet what you were discussing."

"I was telling my father that I intended one day marrying Ivy Strange," Jack said quietly. "But she insists upon her parentage being discovered first."

The delicate brows of Sir Trevor's wife were raised in a quizzical smile. "Really quite a number of people are bitten with that young person's charms! I can hardly congratulate you upon your match, Jack, as one of the most eligible *partis* of the county; and Ivy Strange is what you would scarcely describe as a desirable bride for Maitland Manor's future squire!"

He reddened under her laughing sarcasm, but faced her squarely.

"I know all about that, mater; and as Ivy has as much pride as yourself, she realises it also. I am henceforth going to make it my mission to seek out all that can be traced regarding her birth."

"Poor Jack!" murmured his step-mother. "I am afraid it will be a case of tilting at windmills! But never mind," she said, patting his arm with a pretty gesture, "I trust, for your sake, that love's young dream will prove successful, and that your quest for those wonderful parents will not finish in a garret."

"Whatever I find out, mater," he said, gravely, "it will not influence my love for Ivy. But I must be off now," he said awkwardly, "I have a lot to do." Then, with a brief "Good morning," he turned on his heel and left the room.

"I am disappointed in Jack," said Sir Trevor. "I had hoped better things for him."

His wife shrugged her shoulders. "What can you expect, Trevor, when you allow a mysteriously beautiful young girl to daily throw herself at his head? Even you," she laughed, "wished to adopt the girl!"

Sir Trevor shuffled uneasily. "Adoption is not so serious an act as the elder son of Maitland Manor making her his wife! I am very fond of Ivy, but I must confess I am disappointed in Jack."

Lady Maitland rose from her chair and went to the window. Two figures passed near one of the shrubberies; it was Woolf, walking with Muriel. As her eyes fell upon the eager, upturned face of her child, Lady Maitland caught her breath sharply. Only a few hours ago, and for his dear sake she had almost——! She bit her lips, and turned to her husband.

"I will leave you now, dear. *Au revoir!*"

Once in her boudoir she closed the door gently and sat down.

"I wonder," she murmured silently, "who did it! Who took him, or—*it*—out! I am sure to know soon whether it is a friend or foe! And then——!" She raised her head, and a curiously savage look crossed her face that would have startled the admirers of Sir Trevor Maitland's wife had they seen it.

* * * * *

In the meantime Agnes Maitland was curiously examining a dirty ball of paper, half pulp, that she had taken from her step mother's toy spaniel. He had frisked after it as the wind cheated him of his prize, until he at length caught it, and prepared to make a meal. But Agnes was of an orderly nature, so she, gently and firmly, took the paper from the dog and smoothed it out. It had evidently been crushed into a ball and flung into a waste paper basket; but how it had got into the garden was a mystery. Half the words were entirely obliterated, but she could just faintly decipher one or two.

"Died," she read, and then "release," and in front of "died" were two initials, something like "V. C." or "G." she could not tell which.

"I wonder," she murmured thoughtfully, "*who* 'died,' and what 'release' means?" She folded the paper carefully, and put it in her purse. "I don't remember anyone with the initials 'V. C.' or 'G.,' but I may find out."

As she retraced her steps to the house later in the morning she met her maid, Mason, hurrying towards the kitchen entrance. She looked excited, and her usually quiet black eyes glittered strangely. At the sight of her mistress the woman paused for a moment, then hastened her steps.

"Mason," Agnes called sharply, the woman's manner rousing her suspicion, "where have you been?"

"I beg your pardon, miss," returned the maid, with sullen obedience, "I've been to the village to post a letter."

"That's not true!" said her mistress bluntly. "There is a post-bag that leaves the Manor twice a day, and you know that."

Digitized by Google

The woman flushed. "I'm sorry, miss," she said humbly, "I *did* go to post a letter, but not only for that."

"Then what for?" said Sir Trevor's elder daughter sharply. "Come; you had better be careful what you say. I will find out if it's true!"

"I went to the chemist's, miss," Mason replied. "I have suffered from toothache a lot lately, and to-day was allowed to go into the village and get some mixture. See, this is the bottle, miss," and she held up a small bottle labelled "Nerve Tonic."

Still Agnes was doubtful. She suspected her maid of concealing something, and of having used the toothache as a "blind" for a deeper object.

"Oh, yes, I see the bottle!" she remarked drily; "but I am not sure that you are telling me the truth, Mason. But you may go now," she went on, "I see you are determined to keep something from me."

She turned away, and Mason looked after her with a peculiar expression on her sallow face. "You think yourself very clever, my lady!" she muttered; "but I am not going to help you to find out much. Although I'm no friend of her ladyship's, I'll not give you any satisfaction in your prying."

She went into the house, and continued her duties methodically and satisfactorily, then finding that she had a few minutes to herself she stole to the door of Lady Maitland's boudoir, and knocked timidly three times.

"Come in!" said a low, sweet voice in reply, and Mason entered the room, slowly and deliberately.

"My lady," she said, in a respectful tone, "I have a letter for you."

Lady Maitland turned her head. "Yes, Mason, put it down."

Still the woman hesitated. She advanced nearer into the room, and lowering her voice confidentially, said, "Excuse me, your ladyship. If I give this letter up, what do I get for it?"

Lady Maitland looked at the woman in surprise; she did not often notice servants, but she could not remember having seen the face of the woman before her.

"I don't understand, Mason," she said languidly, "what you mean! I am not in the habit of 'tipping' my servants for bringing me a message."

The woman's sallow face reddened. She had not looked for such a reception; besides, the haughty curtness of her mistress made her uncertain how to proceed.

"This is no ordinary message, my lady," she said, after a pause. "I've got it from no lady or gentleman, but——"

Lady Maitland stifled a yawn with a white hand. "Proceed Mason," she said wearily, "you are very diffuse!"

"But," continued the woman slowly, fixing her long, black eyes upon the face of her beautiful mistress—"*from the man that I let out of your ladyship's wardrobe last night, nearly dead!*"

There was a pause, in which Lady Maitland examined her filbert nails with minute interest, while Mason began to wonder whether her mistress had heard her—or whether she had made a mistake after all!

Suddenly Sir Trevor's wife raised her eyes and fixed them upon the woman before her. "To say that your conduct shocks me, Mason, is too mild an expression. I am horrified to think that a woman of such a peculiarly unprincipled character should have been under my roof! And I am not sure that your audacity in confessing now is not part of a plan to trade on my kindness in forgiving you! Of course I must let Sir Trevor deal with you," she went on, "such subjects are distasteful to me."

The woman, caught in the coils of her own venom, made a futile effort to resist. "Indeed, my lady," she cried, "I did not lock the man in. I"—she stopped, and her mistress laughed contemptuously.

"Don't say anything more, Mason. The fact remains that the man could not have locked himself in my wardrobe without help, and you were his accomplice! Why," she went on sternly, pointing to the letter in the woman's hand, "even the man has more honesty than yourself, for he trusts you with a note to me!"

At that moment Sir Trevor entered the room.

"Ah! I was going to send for you, dear," said his wife. "I am very grieved and distressed to tell you that we have reposed a confidence in Mason that was not merited. She has confessed to me that she locked a man in my wardrobe last night, and let him out when we were at dinner. Just think of it, Trevor!" And her ladyship trembled, while her violet eyes grew moist. "We might all have been murdered in our beds!"

Her husband listened with speechless amazement; then, livid with rage, turned upon the shrinking creature.

"I've a good mind to send for the police, you hussy!" he spluttered; "you will leave this house to-day, and don't come here for a character."

The woman burst into a storm of tears, partly baffled rage, partly fear. She knew the meaning of instant dismissal. As she raised her apron to her eyes she dropped the note from her fingers, where it fluttered to Lady Maitland's feet.

"If you go now, dear," said her ladyship gravely, "I will speak to Mason. Perhaps, in a small way, I may influence her—for good." And a slight smile lurked in the corners of her mouth.

When they were alone, Lady Maitland put one white, strong hand on the sobbing woman's shoulder. "Mason," she said firmly, in a clear, sad voice, "I should be sorry to see you lose your place, and will plead with Sir Trevor to alter his decision, and allow you to make a fresh start. But," she went on slowly, "you must absolutely promise me that you will do nothing to make me regret my kindness. Avoid wrong companions; for once you make a false step you will find it difficult to shake off bad influences. Now go, and remember my words!"

"Oh, your ladyship!" gasped the woman, whose sobs were now of relief; "bless you for your kindness, and forgive me! I—I—" she added shamefacedly, "I will give you the letter."

"I don't want it, your confession will satisfy me, Mason!" replied her mistress. "I don't wish to hear anything more about the subject."

With a sudden gesture the vanquished woman seized her ladyship's hand and kissed it gratefully; then left the room.

For a moment Lady Maitland looked at the hand the woman had kissed, then taking her handkerchief she deliberately rubbed it until a red mark showed on the delicate skin.

"Bah!" she laughed contemptuously, throwing the dainty gossamer article into the fire; "that creature's touch was like the sting of a venomous reptile—only I drew the sting first!"

She laughed again—a laugh of exquisite amusement. "The fool! The poor fool! To think she could pit her cunning against *my* wit! Her clumsy strategy against my generalship! I fancy Mason has met more than her match."

Then, moving her foot, she stooped swiftly, and picked up something that had lain underneath it.

It was the letter Mason had dropped.

SIXTH CHAPTER

The Figure that Followed.

THE wind howled dismally among the trees, and the dead leaves whirled recklessly in semi-circles on the ground, rising—when a sudden gust seized them—for a dance in the air. Overhead, black clouds were scavenging the sky, and a pale moon sent fitful gleams through the bare branches and flickered on the stagnant water of a pond.

A tall figure, clad in some clinging black, and heavily veiled, battled against the wind, and presently paused to cast a glance behind her, where Maitland Manor lay. After a brief scrutiny, she moved on, and at the same moment another figure, also

closely wrapped up, crept from behind a bush and followed swiftly behind.

At the pond's edge, near a large oak, gnarled with age, the woman stopped and looked impatiently round; but the dark was intense, and she could see nothing, a cloud having covered the face of the moon.

Suddenly a hand on her arm roused her, and turning, she encountered a pair of cunning black eyes that leered insolently into her own.

"So you are here?" she said shortly, speaking in a low, cautious tone. "I almost began to hope that—you had changed your mind!"

"It's not likely that I should lose the chance of making a deal," said the man, "'specially since I've got on a good lay. But I'm glad you 'ad the sense to come down to me, or I would 'ave gone up to you; I'm not going to be fooled this time, my fine madam!"

The woman cast a glance of such hatred and loathing at him from behind her heavy veil, that, could glances have killed, he would have been dead at her feet.

"Don't make the mistake of imagining that I am frightened of you," she said in a low, scornful voice, "that would be a waste of your time. I intended to see you at your request here, because it suited me to come; had it not done so, I would have stayed away. But I had to set you right on a certain matter!"

The man sneered. "Yes, it was to put me '*right*' that you turned the lock on me the other night; eh, my 'igh and mighty lady? If it 'adn't been for your girl, you would 'ave done it too. That was one to you—to-night it is my turn!"

She bit her lip. It was gall and wormwood to her proud spirit to be at the mercy of a brute like this! But no other course had been open to her. She had read the pencilled words: "Shall expect you near the old oak in spinny to-night at twelve. Come without fail, and bring money, or shall call at Manor!" She had burnt the letter at once; and when all the household was silent, had crept like a thief in the night, to know what the man who had secured a hold over her intended doing with his knowledge.

"You are mistaken in supposing that I wished you dead," she said coldly; "you must see that your dead body in my wardrobe would be an inconvenient burden to conceal! I locked the door to prevent anyone tampering with it. But that is not the question," she continued hurriedly, "I am here for the purpose of informing you that your knowledge concerning the—convict at Dartmoor has lost its value."

The man took a backward step and peered through the gloom, trying to see whether she was jesting with him. But he saw nothing, and with a brutal gesture, he caught her arm:

"That won't wash, my lady," he hissed. "What 'as took place since yesterday to change the fact that you was the wife of a ——"

"Hush!" murmured the woman, whose hearing, acutely sensitive, had caught the sound of a broken twig. "We are being watched by someone, I know it; and discovery would be awkward for us both."

The man paused, irresolute. It was far from his intention to have his little game queered by an untoward discovery. That would be killing the goose that laid his golden eggs!

"Is that cloak and 'at yours?" he whispered. "If not, let me 'ave them!"

"No; I took them from one of the servant's rooms this evening," she answered. "They were having a party in the kitchen. What are you going to do with them?"

Without replying, the ex-convict put his hand up the trunk of the oak-tree, and felt a half-bent nail that had once supported a notice to trespassers.

"I spotted this 'ere nail this afternoon," he whispered. "Now, if I 'ang your cloak on it so as to show a bit on the ground, when the moon shines out, if anyone comes along and waits for you to turn back the same way, they will 'ave to wait a long time!"

With a grim smile at the idea of the wife of the Chief Constable of Melton being shielded by an ex-convict, she handed him the long, black cloak, which he put on the nail, and the hat just over it.

"Now, put the tail of your skirt over your 'ead," he whispered; "when we've done our bit of business, you can get back over the bridge."

Silently she followed him, walking with cautious tread. The steps behind them had suddenly ceased, for the moon had glimmered through the clouds, and the ruse of the burglar and ex-convict must have been successful.

"Who was it?" she asked herself feverishly. "Who had watched her at this hour?"

The man came to a halt suddenly. "Now, my lady, what I want and mean to get, too, is money. You accepted 'silence' yesterday, and you've got to buy it."

"You shall have money; not as a bribe, but because I promised to a certain extent to give it to you when I agreed to your terms," she said coldly. "But in my momentary panic I had forgotten that there was no need to fear you; for I am free from the shadow that stood between myself and the past."

"What d'ye mean? You aren't bluffing me again, are you? Trying to come over me with a carney trick? Becos, if yer are, ye're on the wrong tack!" and the man tightened his hold on her wrist with an ugly laugh. "Speak plain, or I'll make yer!"

A mocking smile curved the lips of the woman, as she listened to the enraged speech of the outlaw.

"I will 'speak plain,' since you wish it!" she replied. "The man—the convict you saw in that locket—is dead!"

"Dead!" he whispered. "Dead! I don't believe it! It's a lie made up to save yourself from the dock, you white devil! Don't tell me that you know 'e's dead!"

His evil face was close to hers, contorted by a hideous grimace, and in the depths of the narrow, black eyes she could read something that spelt "murder!" For an instant she almost quailed, then, pulling herself together, she laughed softly.

"Why should I lie, my good man? I had my information from the one soul who remained my friend all these years. The man died a year after his release; those were the very words. I destroyed them after reading them several times, So you see our positions are reversed. There is nothing for you to do but go away!"

"All the same," the man growled savagely, "Sir Trevor don't know that you were the wife of a convict! That might interest 'im, anyway, and you 'ardly wish that little fact to be known to 'im!"

"It does not matter in the least, now, if he did know it," she answered coolly; "he would do nothing for the sake of his name and our boy's! I am quite safe! But," she added, "I am prepared to send you twenty pounds when I hear that you have left Melton for London—anywhere—not before!"

An imprecation burst from the burglar's lips as he realised that the hold he had over her was lost. And he had imagined himself on such a good "lay" too!

"You didn't bring the 'ready' with you then?" he said sullenly.

"Not being a fool I brought nothing with me, knowing that gentlemen of your calling have a frail sense of delicacy regarding other people's property," she retorted. "Now, say whether you accept my offer—it will not be repeated."

He hesitated, and his cruel fingers itched to be at the soft, white neck gleaming in the moonlight; but twenty pounds *was* twenty pounds!

"'Ow shall I let you know I am in London?"

"A telegram with the words 'dress ready to send,' will be enough," she answered briefly. "I will send the money by a friend to the District Messenger Office in Regent Street,

Digitized by Google

for you to call for. I shall run no risks; the money will be in gold."

She turned to go, then paused, and said: "It may interest you to learn that the police are much concerned in you just now. Melton is not a safe hiding-place!"

As the gloom hid her from sight, the baffled man sent an oath, strong and venomous, after her.

"Yes, my fine madam, you've scored again, but I'll get my own back one day! To think that after 'anging on all these years, my old pard should kick the bucket just when 'is life 'ad got so valuable!"

He moved away, then a sudden thought struck him, and he laughed grimly. "I'll find out for myself whether there is bunkum in it or not! Then, if I discover she has done me in the eye—my lady will pay for it twice over, in more than money!"

* * * * *

The great hall-clock struck half-past twelve as the mistress of Maitland Manor stepped softly into the dining-room, through the long French windows. She had left them on the latch when she went out, but someone had passed through since, for they were difficult to open at first, as though they had been pulled violently to.

She closed them firmly, then felt under the rug where she had taken the precaution of hiding the key, in case malicious persons should tamper with it. As she turned it in the lock, she smiled grimly, as though tickled by a previous occasion on which she had done the same thing; only then, it was to keep an enemy in; this time it was to keep an enemy—out!

"Now," she murmured softly, "if my suspicions are right, that some person followed me out of the house, I shall know! I hope, whoever it was, that the cold night air will occasion no serious results!"

With a low laugh she stole up the wide stairway into her room, where a dim light was burning. The shutters were up to her windows, preventing the light from being noticed outside.

She undressed quickly, cleaning the mud from her shoes with paper that she afterwards burnt, and in a very short time was fast asleep—one white arm flung over her head, and a smile of unusual sweetness on her lips!

The air grew more chilly as time slipped by, and the waiting figure in the spinny, watching for the woman to come from behind the old oak, shivered with the cold that struck a chill to her lean body.

"If I were not certain," she muttered, "that it *was* she whom I saw from my bedroom-window cross the lawn to-night, I would not wait; but I know there is some mystery afloat, and I mean to fathom it! She can't be long now, and as the clouds have cleared, I shall see her face in the moonlight. She can't escape me; I shall know!"

She cowered down again in her hiding-place, patient and revengeful, nursing the thoughts of her enemy's discomfiture when her treachery should be revealed. Presently the crisp, dry leaves and twigs stirred and crackled ominously, as though heavy steps were treading them down. The heart of the waiting woman beat high with excitement! at last she would run the principals in this secret meeting to earth—find out the reason of the midnight rendezvous.

The steps drew nearer to her hiding-place. Cautiously she stole forward, and looked up. It was a man, walking briskly as though in a hurry. She could not catch more than a passing glimpse of his face, but she saw it was dark and sallow, and that his black eyes glittered cruelly, while round his neck she noticed a red muffler.

The man passed on and again the silence grew intense, fraught with a hundred different voices of the wood—myriads of personalities seemed to people the earth, yet not one sound reached the expectant ears of the woman who watched for the figure behind the old oak to come forward.

At last she rose slowly from her crouching attitude, and stretched her stiffened limbs that ached, and stood irresolute, her eyes fixed upon the cloak that she could see distinctly in the clear moonlight—motionless and sombre, like a gaunt shadow.

A sudden thought struck her, gripping her in a fearful terror. Suppose the woman that wore that cloak had met with death—had faced the Unknown, while she had waited to accuse her—of what?

With a shiver she stole towards the old oak, a clammy moisture bursting out all over her at the thought of what lay on the other side. She knelt down and touched the cloak with timid fingers. She felt nothing under her hand except the stuff she held. With renewed courage she went closer; then, after a brief inspection of the tree, she knew she had been outwitted by a clever ruse, a practical joke that had cost her an hour and a half of sleep, all for nothing! The woman for whom she had waited was represented by a hat and cloak hanging on a nail.

She smiled bitterly at the sudden well of sympathy that had risen in her. Fooled by the woman she had hoped to humble! How she must be laughing at her now! She turned towards the Manor with trembling limbs, feeling in each tree she passed a witness of her mortification!

As she stepped across the lawn she glanced up at the house. All was dark and chill, and with a sensation of having wasted her time, she went towards the long French windows of the dining-room.

Half an hour afterwards Maitland Manor was in a state of confusion, and the subject of interest was the fainting figure of Agnes Maitland, who had dropped insensible on the threshold as the door was opened by a frightened maid, in answer to repeated peals of the bell. When she recovered consciousness Agnes met the kindly gaze of her stepmother, who, lovely in white *negligée*, was bending over her.

"Dear Agnes!" she said, "what does this mean? I thought all the household was in bed ages ago. I woke up suddenly, thinking the Manor was on fire!"

The eyes of the two women met—Lady Maitland's innocent and anxious; her stepdaughter's suspicious and puzzled.

"I don't know," she answered, averting her gaze. "I know I used to walk in my sleep, but I thought I had broken off the habit. But now it seems it has returned."

Lady Maitland laughed softly. "Yes, dear, it looks *very* like it, but you must not let these bad habits return! I shall have to watch you and follow you next time."

"There will be no 'next time,' Lady Maitland," replied Agnes sullenly, feeling that she was at a disadvantage. "I will see that I keep my eyes open!" And she threw a meaning emphasis into her words.

Once again inside her room, and Maitland Manor restored to silence, her ladyship laughed noiselessly. "That has done her good! She will think twice before following me again!"

At that moment, when her maid, Mason, was putting her into bed, Agnes Maitland looked at her closely.

"Mason," she said, drinking the hot milk that had been prescribed for her, "when you were in the village this morning, did you see anything of a stranger in Melton—a dark, loafing-looking man, with a red handkerchief round his neck?"

The woman started, and came towards the bed with dilated eyes.

"A red handkerchief, did you say, miss?" she exclaimed. "I'm not sure, miss—I—I—don't notice people much!"

To herself the woman was thinking:

"What is the meaning of it? Has he spoken to her, too?"

SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Brand of the Broad Arrow.

"I WONDER if I may ask you to do something for me while you are in town, Mr. North? It is a very slight thing, but it requires a friend to accomplish it."

"Indeed, you can depend upon me to do anything for you within my

Digitized by Google

power, in fact, anything outside my power, as well," Heriot North answered, a glad glow within him that he should be honoured by a commission from the peerless wife of Sir Trevor Maitland.

She laughed lightly. "It is nothing very serious. I have a few poor hangers on to my charity, and one in particular—a very deserving man—is in great need of help, I hear, and I thought you might leave a letter from me at 269, Regent Street, a District Messenger Depôt, I believe, where the poor creature has written me from. I cannot send a cheque, for the reason that he has no banking account, so you will not mind gold, will you?" And she smiled sweetly into his face.

"Of course not, Lady Maitland," he replied. "I can hardly express to you that it is a great honour you have conferred upon me. I will be only too glad to serve you in any way, always and at any time you may desire it."

"'Always, and at any time'?" she laughed gaily. "I shall remind you of that promise one day, Mr. North; then you may regret having made it."

"Never!" he breathed fervently, and in after days that promise came back with a terrible significance.

"I suppose you return to India shortly?" Lady Maitland said lightly, flashing a keen glance at him from under her lashes.

"I don't think I shall ever return to India," he replied gravely. "This morning I received an offer to take up the editorship of a big paper in Bombay; I am not sure that I care about it—now."

"Have you seen Agnes yet?" queried her ladyship quietly. "The poor girl has been quite an age in bed with the chill she caught when walking in her sleep the other night. It was most unfortunate!" And the firelight playing on her face sent a distorted smile into her eyes.

"I have not seen her for several days," he answered carelessly. "I am sorry she is ill. But it is not for Agnes that I came to inquire to-day, Lady Maitland!"

"No," she murmured softly, "what then?"

He leant forward, his eyes fixed upon hers with a yearning she did not notice. "It was to ask you whether I should do well to accept that offer for Bombay. I do not require the money, I have enough to satisfy me now. But I would go, even then, unless I knew that——"

"Ah, North, how are you? Glad you've come in to have a chat with us," and Sir Trevor Maitland entered the room, accompanied by his son Woolf. Heriot North concealed his chagrin at the untimely entrance of his host. He had hoped for a *tête-à-tête* with the mistress of Maitland Manor.

Woolf crossed over to his mother, whose eyes lit up with a tender light as the boy laid his head on her knee. "Oh, mummie! What do you think? Parkins told father that he saw a man in the spinny the other night, and he was sure that it was the same man who was in the grounds."

"Yes," broke in Sir Trevor, turning to his wife. "It is most extraordinary, my dear. Parkins declares there was a woman with him also. I am going to have a regular search made. There appears to be a gang about."

Lady Maitland laughed softly, and Heriot North thought he had never seen her look so fair and sweet.

"A woman, did you say, Trevor? I wonder whether it was Agnes walking in her sleep that Parkins saw the other night!" And her eyes flashed with amusement.

Sir Trevor shook his head gravely. "No, Pearl, I think not. She was tall, and was deep in conversation with him also. Besides, Parkins found a——"

Lady Maitland moved slightly, and raised her fan to her face to shield it from the fire. Her skin was very delicate.

"This is getting quite interesting," she laughed gaily. "What did he find, Trevor?"

"A piece of jewellery, my dear. I shall be passing the lodge to-morrow, and will bring it back with me. Parkins did not know whether he ought to have brought it himself."

His wife put a slim, white hand to her neck thoughtfully. "Ah, by the way, I promised to send some needlework down to the lodge to-morrow. I might go down myself, dear, and spare you the trouble."

As her husband turned again to their guest, with a remark about the meet for the following day, Lady Maitland lay back among her cushions, thinking deeply. She knew the effect her beauty had upon the imagination of Heriot North, who, for many years, had had but a limited acquaintance with the feminine sex.

"I fancy he might be useful to me," she thought. "He is quite quixotic, and has an exalted idea of the clinging loveliness of my sex! Yes, he most decidedly would do anything for me, and ask no questions!"

When Heriot rose to go, she was standing in the window, gazing out with pensive eyes.

"Good-bye, Mr. North," she said, gently, placing her hand in his, where it lay like a snowflake, cool and light. "I think you have spent quite enough time in India," she went on, "you must give your friends in England a chance now."

He bent over her hand silently. He had received his first command from Sir Trevor Maitland's haughty wife.

"Thank you, Lady Maitland," he replied simply. "I shall always be at the service of—my friends."

She smiled slightly. It amused her to receive the homage of this courtly man.

"When may I expect your commission for town?" he said, lowering his voice.

She raised her eyes to his, swiftly. "I will send it by messenger to-morrow to the Hollies," she replied clearly.

As they moved towards the door a pair of cruel, spiteful eyes followed them from behind the shelter of a screen.

The opposite end of the long drawing-room was bright with firelight and the sound of laughter, but the watcher on the other side of the screen was in darkness.

"So she is using *him*, now!" she muttered. "I wonder what she is sending to the 'Hollies' that he should take to town? I shall find out somehow."

As Lady Maitland rejoined the group round the hearth, a slight figure slipped noiselessly from behind the screen, and left the room.

* * * * *

"Good morning, Mrs. Parkins; is Ivy Strange in? Tell her I want to speak with her," and Lady Maitland smiled graciously upon the plump, homely wife of the lodge-keeper.

The woman curtsied with pleasure and excitement. A visit from "her ladyship" was an event that did not happen twice in a year.

"Good morning, your leddyship," she stuttered, wiping her red hands quickly on an apron. "Ivy went out just a second ago, your leddyship, but said she would be back almost immediate, your leddyship. Will your leddyship take a chair?"

Lady Maitland smiled again. "Yes, Mrs. Parkins, I will wait just a second or two. I shall enjoy a warm by your bright fire this cold day."

Bristling with gratified importance, Mrs. Parkins brought a chair from the "parlour," and wiped it with her apron; then placed it in front of the roaring fire in the kitchen.

Lady Maitland sat down, and gazed round with smiling interest.

"This is very cheerful, Mrs. Parkins. You have a nice little home here."

The woman flushed with pleasure. "Thank you, your leddyship," she said. "Can I do anything else for your leddyship?"

"Nothing more, except to tell me whether you and Parkins have all you want. I like to make everyone near me happy," replied the sweet voice of her visitor. "Perhaps a basket of things from the Manor kitchen will be acceptable; warm soup on a cold evening is very comforting!" and her ladyship's smile sent a grateful glow through the lodge-keeper's wife.

Digitized by Google

"It's very good of your leddyship, marm!" she murmured. "The very words Parkins said to me the other night was that 'e wished 'e 'ad a little something 'ot for 'is supper."

"Had he been out long?" queried Lady Maitland.

"Yes, your leddyship; sometimes 'e goes round the grounds with one of the gamekeepers. And that night it was that 'e saw a man in the spinny talkin' to a woman!"

"Why did he not stop the man, Mrs. Parkins?" said her visitor; "surely it was dangerous to leave them?"

The woman hesitated. "You see, me leddy, Parkins was not armed, and for all 'e knew, the man might 'ave 'ad fire-arms. But 'e didn't waste 'is time, your leddyship, for 'e picked up something on the very spot afterwards. A pearl brooch, 'e must 'ave stole it, Parkins thinks, yer leddyship. But 'e 'as it to give to the squire."

"Surely, Mrs. Parkins, your husband is not going about with that brooch in his pocket!" exclaimed Lady Maitland. "It would be fatal if it were lost, as it will be most useful in the evidence, should the man be caught."

The woman smiled proudly. "Yer leddyship need 'ave no fear of that. Parkins brought it straight in 'ere, and puts it in the very last place where any thief would look for it!"

"And where is this wonderful place, Mrs. Parkins?" replied Lady Maitland graciously.

"There, on the mantel, inside that vase, your leddyship, and there it will stay until the squire 'as it. Shall I show it your leddyship?"

Lady Maitland shook her head, and stifled a yawn, prettily. "No, I don't think it had better be touched until the proper time, Mrs. Parkins." Then she said, "I am afraid it is getting rather late, and unless Ivy comes soon, I must be going. I wonder can you find someone to run up to the Manor and ask for the parcel I left on the oak settle in the hall? It is work for Ivy."

"Yes; your leddyship," the woman said eagerly. "I will find someone, or go myself; if your leddyship will excuse me leavin' you!"

She smiled graciously, and watched the lodge-keeper's wife hurry away. Then, with a sudden gesture, Lady Maitland rose from the chair, and took something down from the mantel. She emptied what it contained into her hand, smiling as she recognised the object of her search. She replaced the vase, slipped her hand into her pocket, and, after a slight pause, left the lodge, and strolled slowly up the drive. Half way up she saw Mrs. Parkins coming down.

"I stood by the gate after you had gone, Mrs. Parkins," her ladyship smiled, "then grew tired of waiting for that naughty girl! You must tell her to do that work quickly for me." Then, with a gracious gesture, she dismissed the woman.

When she was in her dressing-room, Lady Maitland unlocked her jewel-case and flung something into it, locking it again then putting it away. "I have not done a bad morning's work, after all," she murmured, thoughtfully, "and yet it was a very simple thing that I did!"

She changed her dress and went down to lunch, at peace with the world and herself. In the hall she met Agnes, now well again.

"Ah, Agnes, dear!" she said sweetly; "I wonder whether you are going out for a drive this afternoon? If so, will you do something for me?"

Agnes looked at her doubtfully. "What purpose had she for asking a favour of her?" She felt that something was beneath all this openness—that her step-mother had a reason for wishing her out of the way.

"I'm not sure," she replied curtly; "I did not intend going out. What do you wish done?" she added curiously.

Lady Maitland shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, since you are not using the carriage, I will do my commission myself," she replied carelessly. "It was merely to leave a small parcel of miniatures at Mr. North's place, 'The Hollies.' He is going to London to-morrow, he told us yesterday, and offered to do anything for me, so I thought it a good opportunity to give him the miniatures that I wanted copied. He knows a good place, I believe."

Agnes' face fell. After all, she had listened to a very innocent conversation yesterday, or—and she bit her lip—was her step-mother laughing at her?

At dinner, Sir Trevor turned suddenly to his wife. "Pearl, dear, I forgot to inquire whether you brought back that brooch, or whatever it was, from the lodge this morning."

Lady Maitland started, and looked apologetically across the table.

"Dear, I'm so sorry, but I entirely forgot to ask for it! I went down to the lodge, and chatted with Mrs. Parkins while waiting for Ivy, to give her instructions about the needlework; but when she did not come in—being probably otherwise engaged," and she shot a swift glance at Jack, who flushed hotly, "I could not wait any longer and came away."

"Never mind, my dear," he replied kindly, not liking to see her blame herself; "I will go down this evening after dinner."

Lady Maitland smiled. "Very well, Trevor. Perhaps, after all, you are the best person to receive anything of that nature."

But, deep down in her heart, she laughed at the memory of the locked box upstairs.

* * * * *

"Mrs. Parkins, I want to ask you something; and if you do all you can to help me, you shall be a bridesmaid at my wedding!"

"Lor'! Mr. Jack!" smiled Mrs. Parkins, as the son and heir to Maitland Manor settled himself down easily in the very chair that had been occupied the day before by his lovely step-mother; "'ow you do go on, sir! But if there is anything I can ever do for you, sir—me and Parkins, that is—we would crawl on our 'ands and knees to do it! That we would!"

Jack laughed, and puffed at his cigarette for a few seconds. Then he spoke, and this time he did not joke. "I don't want you to crawl on your hands and knees, Mrs. Parkins—that would only worry me. But I wish you, instead, to crawl back, mentally, fourteen years, and tell me what you remember about that day I found Ivy under the lodge wall."

"Goodness gracious, Mr. Jack!" exclaimed Mrs. Parkins; "whatever makes you ask me such a question now?"

He leant forward and touched the hard, horny hand that lay on the woman's lap. "I ask you that, Mrs. Parkins," he said, gravely, "because I have a great interest in the subject; because one day I hope to make Ivy my wife; but she refuses to let me say anything about marriage until she learns the worst—or the best—about her birth. So I am going to find out what I can; and I begin with you."

During his speech, the lodge-keeper's wife had gazed at him open-mouthed. That he, the future squire—Sir John Maitland, of Melton—should stoop to woo the little foundling that Sir Trevor had had brought up with Miss Muriel, was a surprise so startling, that it took her fully several minutes to recover.

"What! Mr. Jack!" she murmured; "are you serious, sir? Whatever will the squire and 'is lady say?"

"I marry to please myself, Mrs. Parkins," and a note of hauteur crept into Jack Maitland's voice. "My father and step-mother think it is only an infatuation on my part, but they don't know me yet! Now, to come to the subject," he continued; "the first thing to ask you is whether you still have the clothes that Ivy was found in? Although it was I who picked the little mite up, I was only a boy of eleven at the time, and can barely remember anything but the fact."

"Well, sir," she murmured thoughtfully, seeing that he was in earnest, "I can't say as 'ow I did keep the few things she was found in; they was mostly ragged, sir, although it was plain to me, even then, that Ivy was no common child! And when Sir Trevor persuaded 'is lady to let the girl stay with me, and go up to the Manor every day to learn with Miss Muriel, I just settled down with 'er, quite happy like, bless 'er heart! Why,

Digitized by Google

sir, she's grow'd up almost as lovely as 'er leddyship herself—if I'm not makin' too bold," she added hastily.

"Lovelier, to my mind!" Jack murmured. Then he said aloud: "So you have nothing belonging to her, Mrs. Parkins, not even a few beads that were round her neck, or a jacket with a mark, or—anything that might lead to a clue?"

Mrs. Parkins shook her head. "I don't remember beads nor nuffin, sir, but I'll 'ave a look in my old box to-morrow," she added quickly, seeing a cloud on his face. Suddenly she started and exclaimed excitedly:

"Stop, sir! I forgot! There *is* one thing that might 'elp you, if you are bent on findin' out the past! But you must promise never to let on to Ivy that I told you, for the dear bairn don't know 'erself, she's that innercent."

Jack paled, and his eyes grew anxious. What was he to learn about his poor little darling?

"I promise you," he replied quickly, "that she shall know nothing from me!"

Mrs. Parkins paused. "You see, sir, it was little more than a year after Sir Trevor brought 'ome 'is second lady to the Manor, that you found Ivy outside the lodge. Well, she was such a tot, only three, that I took no notice at first to think about looking for anything about 'er particular; for we was all took up with 'er leddyship's wonderful beauty and goodness in the village. But one night, sir——"

She paused to breathe, for Mrs. Parkins was a plump, short-throated dame, and quick speech was not easy to her.

"Go on," said Jack impatiently, his fair brow suddenly becoming moist. "What happened?"

"Nothin' 'appened, sir. But in combing the little love's beautiful, curly 'air one night, I come across a mark, on 'er forehead, right up under 'er curls, 'idden away-like, and the sight of it—faint and red—gave me and Parkins quite a turn!"

"What mark?" said Jack hoarsely; "for Heaven's sake, Mrs. Parkins, don't keep me in suspense! Why should a mark or scar give you a 'turn'?"

"Because, Mr. Jack, sir," replied the woman impressively, leaning forward and sinking her voice to a whisper; "because the mark on little Ivy's brows was the same as you see on them poor critters what figures in pictures in the magazines sometimes. It was a government mark, sir, Parkins said, the very spit of a broad arrow!"

(Another long instalment next week.)

"I do my spring cleaning at all seasons of the year." "How is that?" "I am a watchmaker."

The Visitor (viewing the new baby): "Do you think he is going to resemble his father?" The Mother: "I shouldn't be surprised. He keeps me up every night."

Miss Scraggs: "Yes, once when I was out alone on a dark night I saw a man, and, oh! my goodness, how I ran!" Little Willie: "And did you catch him, sister?"

Professor (to class): "Now, who can tell me the most wonderful achievement of the present century? Miss Morris, I see your hand raised." Miss Morris (proudly): "My sister Nellie has taught her pug dog, Thistle, to smoke."

A mistress told her maid that she must not always do things on her responsibility, but first ask permission. The next day Betty walked into the parlour, and said politely: "Ma'am, the cat is busy eating up the duck in the pantry. May I send her away or not?"

Little Dot: "I made a doll's swing to-day, an' I asked Ethel May to lend me her doll to try it with, an' she wouldn't do it. She's just the meanest, stingiest thing I ever saw." Little Dick: "Why didn't you use your own doll?" Little Dot: "I was afraid it might fall!"

"I must confess," explained a young woman, "that I grow weary of hearing those people talk about their family tree." "I have observed," replied Miss Cayenne, "that family trees are very much like ordinary trees. The old substantial stock is not shaken by any breeze. The more recent and unimportant twigs do all the rustling."

Your Editor Chats.

I would draw your special attention to the fact that I am offering two billiard tables, together with cues, balls, and all other accessories, as prizes in the new Competition which begins on the next page. The billiard tables will make a welcome addition to any room about 13ft. square, and will go on an ordinary dining-table. As regards the Competition itself, it is quite the most fascinating one we have had in *Short Stories* recently, as readers will see.

The last list of sentences but one in the Buried Names of Stations Competition appears on page 725; the last list, together with the closing date of the competition, will be published next week.

I am giving you another long instalment of "The Bond Between" this week. I do not doubt that my readers enjoyed the prologue and chapters which were published last week, and have been anxiously awaiting this number to learn further developments in the story. Anyone who has not yet started it can do so by reading the comprehensive summary of last week's instalment on the first page of the paper.

I have just received a most interesting letter, from which the following is an extract:—

"*I do so wish I had had the opportunity of reading* 'The Confessions of a Self-Made Girl' *earlier in my life. Like Maud Cardew, I was seized with the desire to make a name in the world, and left my country home for London, where, unfortunately, being ignorant of the ways of a big city, I fell into some of the pitfalls that are so abundant. Happily I came through all right, but only after terrible experiences, of which I now shudder to think. Though I have not been quite such a success as Maud Cardew was, I have made as good a position as I desire. I do so hope you will print this letter, so that girls, thinking of going to London or other big cities, who only read the* 'Confessions' *from the story point of view, may re-read them and take to heart the advice contained therein.*"

Comment on this letter is, I think, unnecessary.

Particulars of the competition especially for ladies, about which I told you last week, will be found on page 717.

It is not really much trouble to buy a postal order or stamps, put them in an envelope, stamp and address it, and then post it, but yet how many people find it so. Just because they won't take this small amount of trouble it means that a number of little slum children have to forego their one red-letter day in the whole year—the day which they should spend in the country. It only costs ninepence to give one child a happy day, and that is a sum which I am sure most of my readers could afford.

As soon as you have read this column, put the paper down, go out to the nearest post office, buy nine penny stamps—or a postal order, if you can afford more—write your name and address on a piece of notepaper, put this, together with the stamps or postal order, in an envelope, which stamp and address to the Hon. Sec., Fresh Air Fund, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C. After you have done that you will feel that you can sit down with a clear conscience to enjoy reading the rest of the paper. I hope all my readers will act on this piece of advice.

Your Editor.

Digitized by Google

Letter Juggling Competition.

CASH DOWN. FIRST PRIZE, £25.	CASH DOWN. SECOND PRIZE, £10.	CASH DOWN. THIRD PRIZE, £5.

TWO BILLIARD TABLES *(measuring 4 ft. 10 inches by 2 ft. 8½ inches), together with cues, balls, marking board, and spirit level,*
And **TWENTY-FIVE GRAMOPHONES**, *each one fitted with a Concert Sound-Box, and accompanied by two records.*

• • • • • • • •

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below you will find twelve sets of letters, each of which contains the name of a Railway Station in the United Kingdom (not necessarily using all the letters). You must write (in ink) in the space left for that purpose the longest name you can make by rearranging the letters.

The name containing the greatest number of letters will be the correct solution. If, however, more than one such name can be made out of one set of letters, each will be counted correct.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January (1903) edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to BRADSHAW'S GUIDE, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or ROOM EIGHT, "SHORT STORIES," 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The first prize of £25 will be given to the competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £10 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, take out this page and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in "SHORT STORIES."

In the event of a tie a further set (or, if necessary, several further sets) of letters will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

EXAMPLE:
ABGHIIMMNR... Birmingham.

FIRST LIST.

1. AGGLOSW	**7. DEORV** .....
2. ABEFLST	**8. HMOOPRSTTU** .....
3. DFOORX	**9. DEELMS** .....
4. EILLOOPRV	**10. KORY** .....
5. AAENSSW	**11. ALOPTW** .....
6. BDILNU	**12. ABDEEENR** .....

Name..... Address.....

.....

Digitized by Google

DR. PERCIVAL'S PRESCRIPTION.

Telling of the Happiness a Lost Photograph Brought.

"I cannot tell what's the matter with the girl," remarked Mrs. Folliott crossly to her husband at the breakfast table. "Once upon a time she was punctual at meals, cheerful as a lark, and altogether a happy, light-hearted creature. And now she is quite changed. She has hardly a word to say for herself, moons listlessly about the house, and gives me a lot of anxiety."

"Try a month at Brighton," suggested old Folliott, who also had noticed his daughter's altered demeanour. "I expect West Kensington is getting on her nerves."

"Charles, don't be flippant. I am informed by Dr. Percival that the air of this locality is quite admirable, and as for your suggestion about Brighton, you seem to forget that Maude was there for nearly three weeks not long ago, and came home looking worse than ever."

"In that case," remarked Mr. Folliott gravely, "perhaps you had better take the girl to see Dr. Percival."

Later in the day Maude appeared, looking intensely unhappy. Her mother made no remark to the girl until she had sat for some moments in silence. She then broke the stillness by saying that she intended taking her to the doctor that very afternoon.

"He can't do me any good," said Maude, in a low, quivering tone. "Nobody can."

"Nonsense. A sound tonic will set you on your feet again, and bring some colour to your cheeks. You must certainly do what I suggest."

It therefore came to pass that Dr. Percival's consulting-room was invaded that afternoon by Mrs. Folliott and her daughter. That worthy physician, who had known the girl since infancy, took considerable interest in her case; but after sundry professional queries, admitted that he could find nothing radically wrong.

"Needs a tonic, perhaps," he said, as he seated himself at the table and wrote a prescription.

When the visitors had taken their leave the doctor picked up something that had fallen from Miss Maude's reticule when she took out her handkerchief. It was the photograph of a young and exceedingly good-looking concert singer, Noel Vane, who was rapidly making a big reputation in the musical world.

On the back of the portrait were written these words in Maude's girlish hand—

"O darling, darling, if only we could meet."

"Oho!" pondered the doctor, with a roguish smile, "so that's the cause of the young lady's illness, is it?"

Presently an inspiration flashed through his genial brain. He sat down and wrote to Mrs. Folliott as follows—

"Dear Mrs. Folliott—*Since handing you my prescription this afternoon it has occurred to me that what your daughter needs quite as much as physic is change and amusement. I happen to be on the committee of a concert to be given at the Town Hall in aid of our local hospital, and I have much pleasure in inclosing a couple of tickets for the entertainment, which I hope you will both be able to attend. I further inclose a programme of the performance, and hoping to see you there, remain—Yours very faithfully,* "Claude Percival."

Now, when the letter was read to Maude, she showed little interest therein, until her eyes encountered the programme which the doctor had forwarded. Then a flush came upon her cheek, for in large, bold type, she saw the name "Mr. Noel Vane."

"I—I shall certainly go, mother," she exclaimed, and Mrs. Folliott was amazed to perceive the sudden change that had transfigured her daughter; "and, do you know, I—I feel better already."

"Then that tonic has begun to work wonders very quickly," exclaimed Mrs. Folliott.

* * * * *

"Miss Folliott. Let me present to you Mr. Noel Vane, whom you have heard this evening."

Maude flushed with delight. A moment later she and the young tenor were chatting in a corner, and she was telling him how his voice had delighted her at all times.

"So pleased to hear you say so," he remarked, eyeing her with a glance that held deep admiration. "Er—I am singing at another concert in this neighbourhood next week, and should be delighted if you and your mother would come."

Maude murmured her thanks, whilst Mrs. Folliott, who now strolled towards them, was much gratified at being introduced to the leading singer of the evening.

In the days that followed Maude made steady progress in the direction of health. Mrs. Folliott commented on the "tonic" more than once, and told Maude that she was overjoyed at its success.

Maude smiled. She did not venture to disillusionise her mother by pointing out that the medicine had been used to water the plants, and that not a single drop had found its way down her throat. Yet such was the case, and it was the sequel to the doctor's prescription which was working the change in her, not the prescription itself.

Young Noel Vane soon afterwards became a frequent visitor at Folliott House, where he was made exceedingly welcome. And in the fulness of time Maude sought her mother, and said shyly—

"Mother, I'm engaged to be married."

"Indeed," cried the elder lady, assuming her glasses with an imperious manner. "This is a trifle sudden, I imagine. May I inquire who is the gentleman?"

"It's—it's Noel Vane," replied Maude, with a blush. "We—we always liked each other from the first."

Mrs. Folliott was considerably relieved. She had always feared that Reggie Howard, an impecunious city clerk, had won her daughter's affections, and it was a relief to find that her suspicions were wrong.

Next morning Dr. Percival happened to be passing the house as Miss Folliott emerged, drawing on her gloves.

"Aha, good morning, good morning, my dear," he exclaimed heartily. "You are looking quite well again."

"I *am* quite well again," she replied with a happy smile.

The doctor's acute gaze fixed itself upon a certain ring which lay upon her third finger, a ring that he had not noticed when she had consulted him three months before.

"Engaged, eh?" he said, with a twinkle in his eye. "Let me congratulate you."

She thanked him, and went on to tell him what had happened. The twinkle in the medico's eye deepened as the story was unfolded.

"I'm glad I prescribed that concert for you," he said at length, "and that reminds me that there is a certain photograph, belonging to you, which I picked up in my surgery. I ought to have returned it to you long ago."

Maude blushed very red.

"Oh, doctor!" she cried. "I had been wondering where I dropped it. Then it was you who——"

She broke off suddenly, as the true explanation of the doctor's conduct flashed across her brain.

"It was very, very good of you," she said gratefully, and then added with a laugh, "What do I owe you for your services?"

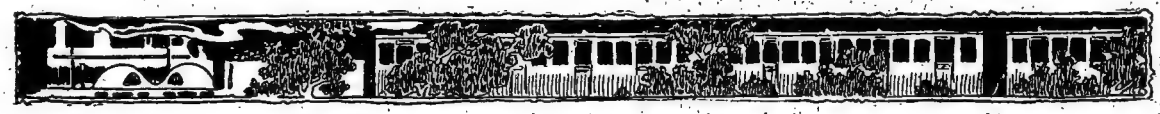
"A slice of wedding cake!" replied Dr. Percival promptly.

And in due course the fee was paid!

P. Beaufoy.

Digitized by Google

Begin reading now



Seizing the rope with both hands, he frantically endeavoured to get free—but without avail.

The Abduction of the Millionaire.

Being the third of six stories told in the Brighton Express and now related

BY

WINIFRED GRAHAM.

The train steamed out of the station and stopped.

"We are creeping to-night," said Stourbridge.

"Harford, it's your turn for a story," declared Mr. Carter.

"Oh! I am not going to shirk my share of our little *causerie*," he replied.

And this is the tale he told:

Benjamin Pimento came of a money-making race, a race which, through long ages, has been noted, not for any special nationality, but for annexing every nation's wealth.

Benjamin's immediate relatives had not kept up the reputation of his race, in much the same way that some thoroughbred horses, instead of gracing a racecourse, find themselves in a hansom cab.

His parents had evidently transmitted their whole stock of wit, capacity, and method, unused, to their offspring. They were too apathetic for the keen, hurrying world into which they introduced young Benjamin.

It had outrun them in the eager chase for gold, and they were left dazed and bewildered at the starting post.

Thus they were living in poverty, instead of enjoying their natural birthright—wealth.

But Benjamin was a true Pimento—he was not destined to pass his career in the narrow straits of that struggling couple to whom he owed his existence. The blood of his forefathers ran strongly and swiftly in his veins, and that he would return to the fold, and prove his breed, was shown at the early age of three.

His mother missed him one morning, and an active search was at once commenced, but it was not amongst his infantile playmates that the boy was eventually discovered. He had found his way to the back of a tumble-down wooden shed, and was holding up his little pinafore, in which to place the loose, rusty nails. His small fingers were busily employed pulling them one by one out of the old rotten edifice.

When asked what he was doing, his natural business talents were displayed by announcing that he was going to sell them to the ironmonger. These propensities developed with age, and from picking out rusty nails in the rotten shed, he rose to collecting old clothes from those who had no further use for them, and selling them to others who had. The trade was a profitable one, and for a time he gave it his fullest energies, since the buying and selling pleased him. In fact he grew to be one of the cleverest and most distinguished members of the Old Clothes Exchange.

In this line he would certainly have possessed himself eventually of a fair fortune, but his ambition soared far above being cramped by the walls of Houndsditch. He longed for something better—his soul yearned to be great—and honoured—looked up to by all men. He wanted to make a position for himself—to fashion his life in a loftier mould. He had brains, and would use them, so he determined upon sailing for the land of gold and diamonds. There he might gather stores of rough gems as he once did rusty nails.

He went out confident of success, brimful of hope and energy. Youth is ever sanguine of prosperity when it first embarks on the sea of fortune. But as for collecting diamonds like nails, Benjamin was disappointed. Yet he found by obtaining them from the natives who had no right to possess them, their cost was small and their sale price large.

Benjamin Pimento did not labour in vain, but by these means soon became rich. With his brilliant business talents and cash capital, he grasped the many opportunities offering in the new land of gold.

Good fortune seemed to lie in his path, and in an amazingly short time he found himself a millionaire, and returned gilded to the great City of London.

But money was not all that he desired. He still had some vast ideas of progress to attain the goal of his ambition. Unlike so many of his race, who only live for greed of hard cash, Benjamin Pimento determined to become a factor in finance, which would soon obtain for him the social position he coveted.

Already the matrimonial market had raised him to a higher rung on Society's ladder. He had married the youngest daughter of a patrician family, whose pedigree was longer than their banking account. The exchange was fair

Digitized by Google

enough—wealth for birth, and the fair bride was not above loving her self-made husband. She spurred him on to loftier aims; she also lived chiefly for the esteem of men. They were well-matched, these two natures, each craving for distinction, and coveting the good opinion of their fellows.

Benjamin's policy, tact, and self-possession had through many a crisis held him in good stead; he was known to be a man of his word, a just master, a true friend.

He opened large offices in the City, and attempted to rival the Bank of England by making his own Consols and Bank. By this means his name became well-known, stockbrokers and West End speculators worshipping at his shrine.

One of the consequences of this notoriety was that he laid himself open to various attempts at fraud.

His partner, Mr. Foster, a shrewd man of the world, whom he had chosen with great judgment, protected him from many wiles, but their name was legion.

They had been discussing these attempts one evening before leaving the office, and had come to the conclusion that someone connected with their staff was divulging business secrets.

"It's very serious," said Foster, wrinkling his brow, as he followed Mr. Pimento downstairs.

"Can you come to the Gaiety to-night? I am dining first with Lord Brackwell, and taking him on there. Look us up if you have nothing better to do. Box A."

"Thanks, I'm afraid I can't manage it. I am engaged to-night."

"See you in the morning, then," said Pimento, as he stepped into his mail-phæton, gathered up the reins, and dashed away with his splendid roans.

Mr. Foster watched him, perhaps a trifle enviously, as he hailed his humble hansom.

"He's a good fellow," he said to himself, "and deserves to be rich. It must be rather gratifying to be run after and gaped at, to be a millionaire and honest—almost an anomaly! I don't suppose there is a more popular man in the City than Ben Pimento, even the rich can stand him."

And that was saying a great deal for the diamond king.

Lord Brackwell was a friend who wanted nothing out of Pimento; he was not one of the aristocratic but impoverished blood-suckers, who only too frequently settled like leeches on Ben and his wife.

He admired his sterling qualities, found his stories of South Africa diverting and amusing, for Ben could be good company, and was very well informed. Besides this, Lord Brackwell was a second cousin of Mrs. Pimento.

They dined together at the "Berkeley," where Benjamin Pimento was a well-known figure.

"You look tired, old man," said Lord Brackwell, with the familiar ease characteristic of him. "You overdo yourself—think too much, eh? There is such a quantity of matter packed into your brain, enough to break it. I avoid the City always; it seems such a nerve-destroying hole."

Pimento smiled.

"Yes, I have a fair amount on my mind for the moment, but nothing connected with finance could ever seem irksome to me. I was born to it, you know; it is the sap of my life, the foundation of my being. I meet with a good many difficulties from time to time. At the present moment Foster and I are ferreting out a veritable snake in the grass. As yet we have said nothing, but I can't stand underhand dealings. I would far rather be brought into contact with highway robbers than office thieves. The first defy, the others cringe, which I hate."

"But the good old days of roadside desperadoes are over; we are no longer attacked on the Queen's highway with a horse-pistol at our heads"

"There are crimes enough without that. It is as well that Claude Duval is out of date."

The two friends strolled late into Box A.

Many eyes were turned in Pimento's direction, for the diamond king was quite a celebrity.

"I like the Gaiety, it does not tax the intellect," said Lord Brackwell. "I can't stand a heavy drama after dinner—it is too indigestible."

"Will you come on with me to the club?" asked Ben, as the curtain fell, and he shrugged himself into his huge fur overcoat, for it was a bitter winter's night.

"Thanks, but I have promised to meet my wife at a ball, she wanted to leave early, so I think I shall go straight on."

As they came out into the vestibule Benjamin's footman, accompanied by another man servant, handed him a letter.

Mr. Pimento tore it open, seeing Foster's writing.

"Dear Ben,—I am sending this to the theatre to catch you coming out. I *must* see you *at once* and *alone*. I have business with someone which will open your eyes. Come immediately. The bearer of this will bring you in my friend's carriage."

"I say, Brackwell," he exclaimed, "take my brougham, won't you? I have a very important affair to settle, and am going on in another conveyance, as I don't know how late I may be detained."

Then, turning to his own footman, he said:

"Tell them not to expect me at home. I am called away on an urgent matter."

"At it again," laughed Brackwell. "Always at fever-heat; burning the candle at both ends; business night and day. What a brain!"

"Good-night."

"Take care of yourself, Ben; you will crack up if you don't look out."

"Physically, then. I hope—not financially," and with these words Pimento was gone.

He followed the strange attendant to a carriage, the door being politely, though hurriedly opened, and he stepped in unobservantly, his head full of Foster's mysterious words:

"Something that would open his eyes!"

The carriage door was shut, and the vehicle rolled quickly away.

Ben threw himself back, and wondered what the nature of the business could be, for Forster was not in the habit of writing so peremptorily about anything.

So entirely engrossed was his mind since the receipt of the letter that he had not noticed the blinds of the brougham were drawn, and that he was in darkness. Suddenly awaking to the fact, he sat upright, and attempted to raise them, but, lo! and behold, his efforts proved fruitless. Much annoyed, he lit a match. Then a blinding, paralysing terror deadened his senses as he glanced round. No blinds, no windows, no door handles visible; only a padded prison of familiar shape.

He rose to his feet half in anger, but more in dread, and shouted vociferously for help. His voice seemed to re-echo like thunder round the walls, only to come back and choke him. The movement continued, the carriage sped on unchecked—no response. He

Digitized by Google

yelled himself hoarse, he beat and kicked where the doors and windows should have been, flinging the whole weight of his body against them, merely to find them of unanswering iron.

Gradually the conviction broke over him, it dulled his nerves till he almost swooned, his pulses fluttered and stopped, he sank back on the seat numb, speechless, till gradually the throbbing life welled back into his veins. Here was he, a millionaire, trapped like a beast of prey in the heart of the City.

He stared with bloodshot eyes at the brougham. He was seated facing the horses in a tiny stronghold compartment. Escape was impossible; he turned giddy and faint again as he realised his position. Why was he there? What was the scheme? He had no money to speak of on his person; a watch and chain and half a dozen sovereigns; that would not pay for the coachman's livery. It was like some ghastly delusion.

The darkness closed over his soul, he longed for a ray of light in that harrowing hour of gloom. But there was not so much as a chink to relieve the blackness. He might have been hidden from sight in a vault down in the earth—underground, instead of passing through the brilliantly-lighted streets of the great Metropolis.

A moment since he had been watching the latest dance, hearing the last new song, in the very midst of life. Now, surely death itself had been preferable to the uncertainty, the maddening horror, of his weird captivity.

The fiercest resistance would have been perfectly fruitless; it was useless to struggle, to scream, to protest. There was no one to listen or heed. He waited in unspeakable perturbation for something to happen.

Presently the carriage stopped. His heart sank. Sounds as of screws being unturned reached his eager ears, while a tremor of apprehension shot through Pimento's trembling form. His utter helplessness appalled him.

The unscrewing ceased, for a moment all was still, then a slight shake and a drop, and he found his carriage moving at right angles, still evidently on wheels. Several yards appeared to be traversed quite smoothly, again a stoppage, and with it the momentary cessation of Pimento's heart.

Then, to his utter amazement, the door of the carriage flew open, and he sprang out to find himself in a handsomely-furnished room. He stood for a second staggered, bewildered; he brushed the cold sweat from his brow, and a sigh almost approaching relief escaped his lips.

Looking round dazed, but hopeful, the words which were almost too good to be true broke from him involuntarily:

"Some joke of Foster's!"

A joke! The silent walls seemed to repeat that unlikely assertion in ribald jeers. Was that suspicious box in which he was detained—a joke? Ah! foolish fancy, how easily you mislead the despondent mind, that longs to sooths its panic and dismay by even the thinnest fabrication!

He turned to inspect his large cage. It was just as he expected, an iron compartment, shaped like a very small brougham, and capable of being removed at will on to smaller wheels. By this means it had been run into the room, which was equally alarming, being utterly bereft of doors or windows. He looked eagerly for some way of escape, but, alas! there was none, absolutely no trace of any outlet whatsoever.

Purple velvet curtains from floor to ceiling covered only *apparent* windows. Benjamin grew gradually more awe-struck and perplexed. He felt every inch of the wall; he tried them with hands and boots, but no secret spring answered to his efforts.

At last, wearied by unsuccessful attempts, he drew Foster's letter from his pocket to ascertain if he had been deceived by a clever forgery. His eyes ran anxiously down the page, he scanned the letter, word for word, with wrinkled brow. Yes, sure enough, the handwriting was miraculously similar, but *not* Foster's genuine style. He could see that at last—the daring imitation, the audacious signature, copied to the life.

He ground his teeth, crushing the false message in his hands with a muttered imprecation. All doubt disappeared; the scales fell from his eyes, as he realised at last unmistakably that he was the victim of foul play. As yet the motive of this plot had to be revealed. It was all as strange and inexplicable as ever.

Suddenly he was roused from his unpleasant reflections by the silent lowering of an iron curtain, which descended from the ceiling in front of the carriage, shutting it out from the apartment.

"Was it going on its silent way to seek another unwary occupant?" The grim thought crossed Benjamin's distracted mind.

"Poor fellows!" he muttered compassionately. He began to wonder who his unseen foes could be—why they had brought him there with such reckless daring. Surely they never intended him to leave alive! Yet they could not obtain his money without his help, and he remembered no one who would wish to murder him from malice or revenge.

A few hot words, and in the far-off land many a stand-up fight and midnight adventure. But Ben could recall no enemies who thirsted for his blood or vowed to track him down and take his life; he had never done any especial harm. Since his return as a millionaire he had tried to make himself popular and beloved. His generosity became a proverb among his friends—"As lavish as Pimento," "As charitable as 'Ben.'"

Then why was he here in this lion's den? He stretched out his arms and called loudly on his tormentors:

"Where are you—*what* are you?—fiends—scoundrels. Come out and face me; say all that you have against me, and I will answer you as man to man. What! you dare not? There is nothing to fear in a weak, unarmed, defenceless prisoner. Surely you will tell me your intentions—give me some trial? Can't you explain this dastard's trick?"

Pimento was on his mettle at last, and determined to show a bold front.

His words, though they fell on dead walls, evidently reached some unseen ears.

A voice, which he could not locate, answered, addressing him by name—"Mr. Pimento."

He looked swiftly round. No sign, no form, only the words.

He waited impatiently.

"Yes," he cried fiercely; "I am here—Benjamin Pimento—continue."

His tone was one of lofty command, though his blood ran cold and his knees knocked together.

"You are in our power."

Bah! how well he knew it.

"Do what we bid you, obey implicitly, and all shall be well with you."

He started, and replied with fresh force and energy:

"What do you want? Is it money?"

Again the voice made answer:

Digitized by Google

"Sit at the writing-table, and commit to paper exactly what I tell you, word for word—no more, no less."

He turned, and saw at the far end of the room a large desk, on which were paper, envelopes, pen, ink. The thick nib that he always used was placed in readiness. Chance, he thought, as his eye fell upon it. He pulled forward a high-backed chair, and sank into it exhausted. The weight of his arm as he raised the pen felt like lead, his fingers seemed paralysed, with every movement he glanced furtively behind him.

He pulled the empty sheet towards him, and waited for the voice to speak again.

It came distinctly.

"Date your letter to-day, Monday night, nothing more, and commence:

"Dear Foss."

Pimento dropped his pen in surprise and disgust. It rolled across the paper, making a black smudge.

It was the familiar term of "Foss" that had startled him more even than all the unnatural events of the evening, this being the way in which his private and confidential letters to his partner were always addressed.

It was clear this diabolical scheme was the work of one "in the know."

"Write on," said the voice gruffly.

"I wish you had been at the theatre to-night," continued the dictator. "I have a splendid piece of business on. It will startle the City. Our consols and banks are not in it."

Again the pen rolled from his quivering grasp, this time upon the blotting paper.

Ben flung back his head, while great drops of perspiration stood out on his face.

"Need I mention them?" he groaned.

But the voice inexorably repeated: "Our consols and banks are not in it. Mr. Frank Moleyns will call upon you in the morning about eleven o'clock with a letter from me. Be prepared with £100,000 in cash for him. I shall not be able to accompany him, but will ring you up on the telephone at that time, and speak to you myself. Withdraw all assistance from the Stock Exchange to-morrow."

Benjamin Pimento leapt to his feet as if he had been struck, his eyes aflame with indignation, his breast swelling, his teeth clenched. He gasped for breath; when his words came they were choked with fury.

"I can't do it," he cried, livid with anger, resentment, dread. "The money is bad enough, but the other affects my *honour*. I have publicly stated that the market shall have my assistance, and not to do so would ruin my character in the City. They will put me down as a trickster."

A jeering laugh was the only reply from behind the wall.

"Write it."

He brought his fist down on the desk with a thud that resounded in the room.

"No," he hissed, and there was a ring of determination and deadly earnestness in the assertion.

There was silence. Ben sat staring at the paper without showing any inclination to proceed.

His mind was made up. Nothing should induce him to pen that scandalous sentence. He had risen step by step on to a pinnacle, his word was his bond, nothing should cast him down.

As he thus mused, he did not notice a rope fall over his head and tighten round his neck, each end passing through the opposite walls of the room. Seizing it with his hands, Benjamin endeavoured frantically to wrench himself free, but with no avail. So far he could breathe, but the unpleasant pressure on his throat warned him how easily that fleeting breath might be arrested.

The terrors of death compassed him about. He thought of the wife who loved him, the home in which she was the joy and sunshine. Could he give up all for the sake of his honour? It was a hard bill to pay.

"Thieves—villains—murderers!" he gasped, in a half-strangled whisper.

The voice said in its calm, calculating tones: "You are powerless to stop the tightening of this rope, write what you are told, and it will slacken. This is your last chance."

Life is dear, life above all things when death has laid his cold hand upon its victim. Benjamin Pimento was only mortal after all. Compliance being thus a sheer necessity, he wrote the fatal command:

"*Withdraw all assistance from the Stock Exchange to-morrow.*—*Yours ever*, Ben."

The voice continued:

"Address the envelope to your office, and place it on the bracket in front of you."

Reluctantly he obeyed. His head fell between his hands, he ground his teeth in agony and despair.

He stared through his fingers at that shameful epistle. The bracket revolved through the wall; his letter had gone beyond his reach—beyond control. Death or dishonour—dishonour or death! The words rang in his ears.

"It will be posted to-night," he thought, pacing with silent tread on the thick carpet. "What *will* Foster think? My writing, my orders! All that I have lived for—the position I have worked, fought, struggled to obtain—irretrievably lost! I shall be written down as a low-class speculator, who will stick at no meanness to affect markets!"

He paused in his steady march, for another movement attracted his attention—a table which revolved through the wall, and was spread with a most *recherché* supper, and a notice on it:

"Eat and drink, for to-morrow (if you behave yourself) you will not die. The couch in the corner will serve for your repose, which we trust will be undisturbed."

So those dare-devil desperadoes had not forgotten the courtesies of life; they would press their appetising fare on the unwilling guest, and lodge him in the luxurious apartment upon a bed of cushions and eiderdowns.

They had provided lavishly for his comfort, though he gazed on the elegant dishes disdainfully.

How could he eat? He turned from the table, revolted by the sight of food. But his throat was dry and sore, he fancied he still felt the rope on his windpipe, and, filling a glass of champagne, he drank it down feverishly, and another and another.

Then he fell wearily upon the lounge, overwrought by the miseries of the night, and tossed in mental torture till the day dawned, when his haggard eyes closed in the heavy, dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion.

When he awoke and a flood of thought rushed in upon his dazed senses, the wretchedness of his position returned tenfold. With another day fresh humiliations were forced upon him, and the cruel voice (when he had made a farce of breakfasting) ordered Benjamin Pimento once more to the desk.

"Remember," it repeated, "write every syllable, or your fate is sealed."

Again that objectionable forcing of their knowledge upon Ben.

"Dear Foss,—*The bearer of this, Mr. Frank Moleyns, is the gentleman I wrote to you about last night. He will call about eleven, when I will ring you up on the telephone.*"

A last wild hope rose into his heart as he penned the words that from getting on to the telephone he might possibly be able to slip in a word of caution. At any rate it would show Foster who he was.

So he clung to this little grain of comfort till the voice informed him it was then eleven.

"You are required at the telephone," it solemnly announced.

Benjamin was startled from a reverie into which he had fallen, planning an impossible escape.

"Where is it?" he asked breathlessly.

As he turned to look, the wall at his right to about his own height and width receded, forming a niche in which he saw the mouth of the telephone.

Pimento walked up to it curiously, and stood in the niche, whereupon the rope again dropped over his neck, and the voice, now close to his ear, whispered:

"You must repeat my very words, no others. Any attempt to do so, and your speech will be silenced for ever."

Digitized by Google

The rope appeared to palpably tighten as if in warning.

"Do not think there is any chance of their discovering your hiding place by this telephone. We shall connect it with a wire over the house whose number is far from here."

In all his troubles Pimento could not but remark their forethought and cleverness.

"Remember," continued the voice, "we hear what is said to you, for we have a connecting wire, and your answers must be exactly what we whisper in your ear or you will never leave these walls."

The electric call bell rang, and the voice said loudly—

"Number 37,804."

Yes, that was his number.

Soon another ring of the bell announced the connection, while the familiar voice of one of his clerks asked—

"Are you there? Who are you?"

The hidden whisper said—

"Connect me with Mr. Foster."

Almost immediately his partner's tones saluted his ear.

"Hulloa! Is that you, Ben?"

The whisper answered "Yes."

"Yes," repeated Ben.

"Where are you?"

"Never mind," said the whisper. "Has Mr. Frank Moleyns called?"

"Yes, he is here now," came the reply.

"Can you recognise my voice?" continued the whisper, which Benjamin Pimento passed on.

"Perfectly," from Foster.

"Then give him that £100,000 at once in bank-notes."

"I have drawn it for him, and will hand it to him now."

The whisper said—

"When he has got it tell him to speak to me."

Almost immediately a totally strange voice addressed Pimento.

"I have got the £100,000 and will at once use it for the purpose arranged between us. Shall I explain the matter to Mr. Foster?"

The whisper answered—

"No; I will do so as soon as I can get into the City. You get off with it at once. Tell Mr. Foster to speak to me."

Foster's voice was again heard.

The whisper dictated—

"Send that fellow Moleyns off at once with the money, and don't keep him gossiping."

He could faintly hear Foster's farewell to Moleyns and the £100,000.

Again Foster's voice was at the telephone.

"I must speak to you about the other matter. You promised, as you know, to 'take in' any quantity of your Banks and Consols. Now that they find you are breaking faith with them, these stocks are falling heavily, and we are being roundly rated for our deceit. Pray withdraw now what you wrote me."

The rope tightened.

The whisper said—

"Tell them you won't do so."

As Benjamin hesitated the cords nearly choked him. He began gasping the words which at once loosened the cruel pressure.

"Tell them I shall not do so. Good-bye."

The connection was rung off, the rope withdrawn.

Pimento staggered back. What a villain all his friends whom he had told to buy the shares would think him. His character in the City would be ruined for life.

The voice resumed its former position, and told him to make himself comfortable for the day.

"Can't I leave now?" he moaned. "Are you not even yet satisfied?"

"Quite," replied the voice. "But we must have a quiet day without your interference, to turn the notes into gold and to allow sufficient fall for the shares."

Ben groaned. "Sufficient fall for the shares!"

He cared little for the £100,000 compared with his damaged financial honour.

The day dragged wearily by; at nightfall the revolving iron shutter gradually rose, and his carriage reappeared.

"Get in," said the voice, "and fear not for your safety."

He quickly complied, the door was shut, the wheels moved, and stopped. There was a lifting and a screwing, followed by the welcome rattle of wheels over stones. The drive seemed short, shorter than he had expected.

The carriage stopped, he eagerly waited for the lifting and screwing, but it did not come. He was evidently in some large thoroughfare. Still no movement of the carriage. What could it mean?

Feeling assured of the proximity of passers-by he determined to make one bid for his liberty.

With a yell and a bang on the door, which was immediately opened by someone passing, to his intense astonishment he jumped out.

At that instant a newspaper boy passing shouted—

"Evenin' paper! Great panic in the City!"

Where was he? The carriage stood still, the horse being held by a man at its head.

Pimento looked round, recognising the Café Royal, Regent Street, a short way off. Collecting himself in a moment, he sprang like a tiger at the man by the horse.

The passers-by, as well as the victim attacked, evidently took him for a lunatic, and called "Police!"

On a constable arriving, the horse-holder explained that he was employed in the public-house across the pavement, and the coachman had asked him to hold the horse while he had a drink, for which purpose he went inside, and had not yet come out.

Benjamin followed hastily, dashed inside, but found the man had drunk his glass of beer and left by an opposite door, leading into a side street, where all clue was lost.

The carriage and horse were taken to Scotland Yard, all that was left to Benjamin Pimento for his £100,000. But even these did not serve to disclose the plot, which remains a mystery to this day.

Ben's intimate friends believed the story as told, but the financial world looked upon it as ridiculous, and credited him with inventing it, as a cloak to cover his disgraceful means of getting back his shares cheap. The social public smiled and said: *Cherchez la femme!*

(*Next week: "A Strange Encounter."*)

WHO WANTS A HUSBAND?

A Competition for Ladies Only.

The Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* has decided to offer his assistant, Mr. P. Doubleyou, as a prize to his lady readers. Mr. P. Doubleyou is tall and well-built, has regular features, fair hair and blue eyes, a broad, thoughtful brow, and looks the Briton to perfection.

Ladies between the ages of seventeen and seventy are eligible to compete. They must, however, be either spinsters or widows.

The fact of entering the competition does not in any way bind the successful competitor to marry Mr. P. Doubleyou if she doesn't like him after the meeting has taken place.

All expenses in connection with the marriage, including the bride's trousseau—which she will be allowed to choose herself—and white silk wedding dress, will be defrayed by *Pearson's Weekly*. Mr. P. Doubleyou will be granted a month's holiday for the honeymoon, of which all expenses will be paid.

Full particulars as to how you may win this prize will be found in the Whitsun Holiday Number of *Pearson's Weekly*, now on sale. Price twopence.

Digitized by Google

CHERRIES AND PILLS.

Telling of the Conquest of Science by Love.

"Oh, come, mother, that's not fair, you have been gloating over that letter of yours with the most intense satisfaction depicted on every feature, and yet you are mean enough to keep the contents to yourself. I protest!"

"Hush, Joey," remonstrated the elder sister, "you should not be so flippant."

"Nonsense, Loo, you need not pretend to be so aggressively faultless, for you are just longing to know the contents of that letter, only you are such a fraud, you can go on placidly absorbing bacon and eggs, and toast and butter while curiosity devours you. Now I can't, that's just the difference between us!"

Mrs. Braxton and her daughters were sitting over the breakfast-table, while this light skirmish of words was going on between the two sisters.

Mrs. Braxton had very aristocratic tastes; when her first baby girl had made her appearance, the proud mother had insisted on giving her the high-sounding French name of Marie-Louise, to which she always religiously adhered despite its length, though many other people used the pet diminutive of Loo.

When, five years later, a second child was added to the nursery, nothing would content Mrs. Braxton but to call the new stranger Josephine.

Mr. Braxton mildly protested, then comforted himself by calling the child Joey. It had been a bitter disappointment to him not to have a son, and as the youthful Joey developed the most mischievous boy-like tendencies, he lured himself into the belief that she really was a boy. She was the companion of all his leisure hours, which unfortunately were few, as he was a busy city man.

Marie-Louise, who much resembled her mother, was the latter's favourite. Then came the sudden failure of Mr. Braxton's business in the city, through no fault of his, but through the culpability of his partner.

Mr. Braxton's health broke down under the harassing strain, both mental and physical, the doctors prescribed change of air. Mrs. Braxton proceeded to Mentone with her husband. Alas! all to no purpose, for hardly had they reached the South of France when Mr. Braxton died.

Nothing remained to the widow but to return to England and try to settle their affairs. Mrs. Braxton and her children had only a very small pittance left upon which to live, and they retired to a small place in Wiltshire.

Marie-Louise and her mother found it very hard to get reconciled to their life and surroundings at the Gable House, in this small, out-of-the-way village of Woodford. The society of the place was composed of the Rector and his family, the Doctor, and a few gentleman farmers.

It was now two years since they had been "buried alive in this hole," as Marie-Louise was wont contemptuously to style the Gable House, and the London-bred girl pined for some excitement, some change in their miserable, dull life, when a bright thought struck her. Why not advertise for a boarder? She at once submitted her idea to her mother.

"But, my dear child," the latter argued, "what girl would care to come and vegetate in our parts?"

"Girl! Mother, why, surely you did not suppose I meant a lady boarder; a gentleman, of course, is what we want, some nice man from London who needs relaxation, country air, and perhaps a little shooting. All these advantages he could get here, besides the society of cultured ladies."

"Child, child, how you do talk on! What about the risk of bringing you two girls into close contact with a strange man of whom I should naturally know next to nothing."

"Pooh, mother, you need have no fears on that subject. I am well able to look after myself, and as for Joey, why, no man will trouble his head about that awkward, romping school-girl, such a chit of a child."

"Well, but, Marie-Louise, how are we to get this boarder?"

"Oh, advertise, of course. Much as I hate this old place for its being so far from London, it is most picturesque with its projecting gables and lattice-windows, where ivy and roses, clematis and jessamine creep all over the premises. Most men coming from chambers in town would simply rave about the ideal poetry of the whole thing."

"In fact, for anyone but you, this is a very paradise of earthly bliss," said the mother smiling and coming round gradually as she always did to every suggestion of her favourite daughter.

"Of course it is, mother, and then just think of the inexhaustible fund we can draw upon to attract antiquarians and lovers of the relics of the past. Think of Stonehenge, Old Sarum, Salisbury Cathedral, all within, so to speak, a stone's throw of the Gable House."

So the matter was settled and the notice sent up to the *Morning Post*. When Joey heard of this, she vehemently protested.

"Oh, mother, Loo, how excruciatingly horrid to have a boarder, a strange man prowling about our place. We shall feel as if we must never talk about anything freely in the presence of this intruder!"

"You will certainly have to keep guard a little over your vocabulary of slang such as boys use in the public schools," sneered her sister.

Joey knew her protestations were not of the slightest use.

Several weeks passed and the advertisement remained unanswered.

"Well," burst out Joey, one Sunday evening, "it is the first time an earnest prayer of mine has been answered."

"What on earth does the child mean?" queried Mrs. Braxton.

"Oh, nothing, mother, only for several Sundays now I have inserted a clause in the Litany:

"'From a boarder or any other noxious reptile, Good Lord, deliver us!'"

"Josephine," severely exclaimed her sister, "you are profane, nay, almost blasphemous!"

And now, the letter Mrs. Braxton was so intent on reading, even to the neglecting of her fragrant morning beverage, was from a gentleman, asking to come and spend a month at the Gable House. Smiling, Mrs. Braxton at last laid the letter down:

"My dear girls, here is some promising and pleasant news."

"Oh, I know," groaned poor Joey, "it is from some horrible man who is coming to inflict himself upon us. I shall feel

Digitized by Google

inclined to put crackers under his pillow or do something dreadful!"

"I hope a daughter of mine will always remember she is a lady!"

"Yes, mother, but it is so tame being a lady; now if I were a country wench, I could just do as I like."

"But, mother, do tell us," impatiently broke in Marie-Louise, "who is he? What does he say? When is he coming?"

"Gently, gently, my dear, I cannot answer a string of questions all at once. First of all, he is not quite a stranger and that quiets my scruples about his associating with you two girls——"

"Don't be afraid, mother dear, *I* shall not give him much of my society!"

"Don't be such a chatterbox, Joey, and let mother tell us all about him."

"Well, my notice in the *Morning Post* was seen by a former school friend of mine; she married long before I did, and we lost sight of each other, though we heard of each other's wedding; only our paths in life lay in different ways, and we never met. However, she is a widow now and has a son who is one of the rising doctors in London——"

"Oh, good gracious, a quack who will chase us round the house with physic-bottles and pill-boxes, it is even worse than I thought!"

"Josephine, be quiet at once. He is a rising young doctor, in fact his mother says he is one of the shining lights of science in the medical world. He is sadly in want of a change, wishes especially for peace and quiet, and his mother on seeing my name strongly urged him to try this out-of-the-way spot where he could have absolute rest.

"He is wonderfully clever and learned, deeply read, and Stonehenge and Old Sarum are helping to attract him here. We are to wire back 'yes' or 'no' if we can take him in to-morrow."

"Oh, goodness, I never thought the evil day was so close at hand!"

"Mother, this is too delightful and exciting. What is his name? Of course, he is unmarried?"

"Oh, Loo, surely you are not going to set your cap at a man who will pay us so much for his keep, who will come to our house as he would to a wayside hostelry!"

"Josephine, really your nonsensical remarks are too silly. Mother, do tell her she must in future be more careful with that glib tongue of hers."

"Oh, don't worry, Loo; I shall be mute enough when that wretched pill-giver is here."

"Mind, girls, I wish to impress on you that this gentleman is to be treated absolutely as a *guest*," Mrs. Braxton laid great stress on this word, "there is to be no question of his being a boarder, that would be most indelicate. You are to tell all our acquaintances in the village that we are expecting a guest. We must, of course, get the spare room ready at once and telegraph to Doctor Rocklin that we shall be quite ready for him to-morrow."

"Rocklin, mother, what a sweet name!"

"Yes, Gilbert Rocklin."

"I wonder if he is good-looking!"

"Oh, Loo, I shall sketch you his phiz in half a minute. Bald pate from overstudy and excess of brain development, blue specs. to show he is a 'savant,' slight stoop of the shoulders, resulting from constant poring over his books."

"A truce to your folly, Josephine; there are serious household matters to be discussed and carried out before our guest arrives."

The whole house was turned inside out the next day preparing for the stranger, whose advent was so distasteful to poor Joey. Mrs. Braxton donned her black Sunday silk and her most coquettish lace cap; as for Marie-Louise, she arrayed herself in a most becoming pale lavender frock, which "suited her style of beauty," she asserted.

Joey made no change in her everyday toilette. Disgusted with all the fuss made over the expected arrival of "the wretch!"

Standing beneath the tree, and gazing up at her, was a very good-looking young man.

as she mentally called him, she bent her steps into the orchard with a novel well tucked away into the bosom of her dress. She promised herself the delights of a whole afternoon's reading.

The orchard at the Gable House was quite an ideal spot; the trees were generally well-laden with fruit as each season came round, and the orchard sloped right down to the river Avon, which meandered along between its green banks perfumed by the exquisite fragrance of the tall meadow-sweet, which seems to grow here in greater profusion than in any other part of England.

This happened to be the month of June, the loveliest month, perhaps of any of the twelve; the

Digitized by Google

whole of Nature seems to bloom and bud afresh, and we are not yet scorched by the burning rays of the July or August sun.

Joey made straight for the farthest end of the orchard; she stopped under the spreading branches of a veteran cherry-tree, whose gnarled trunk proclaimed its great age.

Nimbly as a young squirrel she climbed into the tree, and soon ensconced herself comfortably among the branches. She buried herself in her book and was soon lost to all else besides. She never realised exactly how long she had been up there, when some sort of mysterious instinct warned her she was no longer alone in the orchard.

Lifting her eyes from her book she looked down. To her horror she saw a man (in spite of her dismay she was quick to notice he was a very good-looking young man) standing right beneath her tree and gazing up at her with an amused twinkle in his handsome, honest, brown eyes.

Surely this gentleman who looked so aggressively youthful could not be the swell physician from London; but, then, who on earth *could* he be?

He was the first to break the embarrassing silence.

"What a cosy seat you seem to have up there!"

"Oh, the monster!" thought Joey, "to pass remarks on my position up here!" Still she tried, in spite of adverse circumstances, to be dignified, and she addressed him in a freezing tone:

"You have the advantage of me, sir, as I have not the honour of knowing who you are!"

"Well, yes, I suppose I am trespassing really, but I was not aware this was private property till I came unawares upon this tree, bearing such unexpected and charming fruit."

Joey blushed, and then felt angry with herself for being so idiotic. He pretended not to notice and calmly proceeded:

"I lost my way coming from the station, wandered along the banks of your river, which is a dream of beauty, and quite unintentionally, I assure you, stumbled into your orchard. I was seeking the Gable House."

"Oh! then you are really Dr. Rocklin?"

"Yes, certainly, very much at your service."

"Oh, no, thanks! I do not want your services at all!"

He laughed outright.

"Nay, don't alarm yourself, I shall not feel your pulse and prescribe for you against your will. Besides, the roses on your cheeks are evidences enough that you do not need my services."

Again Joey blushed, feeling wild with herself all the time for doing so.

"May I inquire how you know my name, when I am quite in the dark as to yours?" he queried.

"Of course I guessed who you are because this is the Gable House, only you have come in at the back instead of the front."

"Indeed!" And the young doctor seemed unnaturally elated at this piece of information.

"And so, *you* are Miss Braxton?"

"Oh, dear me, no! I am not Miss Braxton," and Joey laughed at the mere thought of being mistaken for her sister, "I am only Joey; my elder sister, Marie-Louise, is beautiful."

"And, Miss Joey, may I ask what *she* is, then?" and again she noticed the merry twinkle in his brown eyes.

"I? Ah, well, mother says I am an insignificant little schoolgirl!"

"Indeed! There is evidently some truth in the saying, 'one is never a prophet in one's own country.' So you are Miss Braxton Number Two, is that it?"

"Well, I suppose so, only no one ever calls me so—I am Joey, always Joey, to everyone!"

"I wonder if I might ask why they have presented you with our Colonial Secretary's Christian name. I never heard of a lady called Joey before!"

"Oh, that was my poor father's doing! You see he wished me to be a boy, and, failing that, he gave me a boy's name. My real name is Josephine."

"How very Napoleonic!"

"Yes, rather; I hate that pompous, French-sounding name—all those who love me call me Joey."

"Then I expect scores of people use that name."

She opened her large blue eyes to their widest extent. Was he unkindly making fun of her? No, he looked the very picture of innocence. She could not help thinking that, after all, his coming to the Gable House was not exactly the calamity she had dreaded. Only now she really wished he would betake himself to some other part of the premises; how on earth was she to descend from her tree if he would persist in remaining here? He seemed to read her thoughts, for he said abruptly:

"Won't you descend from your pedestal? I am at a disadvantage here, and you have to talk down to me!"

"Oh, please, Dr. Rocklin, would you mind going to the summer-house, just beyond those laurel-bushes, and fetching a basket so that we can gather some cherries?"

He gave her another of his quizzical looks from his merry brown eyes, and poor Joey was miserably conscious that he saw through her little device.

"Certainly, Miss Joey, if you pay me sufficiently high, I shall do your bidding."

"Pay you—how?"

"Well, bribe me, if you prefer it. Throw me down some of those cherries which are within your reach and out of mine."

Joey laughed, how boyish he seemed in spite of his learning and science. She plucked a large cherry, and, holding it between her finger and thumb, cried out merrily:

"Catch!"

"Shoot straight!" came the laughing retort, and he opened his mouth to receive the tempting morsel.

"Oh, for shame, Miss Joey, you aimed at my nose—I know you did! Let's try again."

And again and again Joey pelted him with cherries, which he sometimes ate, sometimes threw back at her. They both thoroughly enjoyed their little game, and were as elated as a couple of school-children out for a holiday.

At last Joey exclaimed:

"Haven't I bribed you enough? Do go for that basket!"

"Are you tired of our nice little game?" and he looked up at her half reproachfully.

"Oh, no, but—" she faltered in an embarrassed way.

"Yes, I see—quite so; you are weary of your exalted position," and, with a mischievous backward look, he strode off in the direction of the summer-house.

She did not lose much time in scrambling down from her tree, and when he returned she was busy picking up the fallen cherries, looking as demure as possible.

"Now, Miss Joey, if you had only asked me to help you down this would not have happened," and with his stick he pointed to a huge rent in her frock.

"Nor this!" and again his stick pointed, but this time it was her hair to which looked perilously near to falling, pins and hair seemed ready to part company for good.

She hastily put up her hand to prop up the falling structure, but too late, and in billowy waves of soft auburn silk, her beautiful hair fell over her shoulders, to her utter confusion.

"Shall I go for another basket?" he gravely asked.

"Oh, Dr. Rocklin, you are simply horrid—go away!" and helplessly she tried to stick in a rebellious pin here and there.

"Am I really horrid? You mean what you say, Miss Joey?"

"Yes, certainly, before you came I never called you anything, but the *wretch!* and I think I shall stick to it even now."

"Indeed! Why call me names before ever you laid eyes on me?"

"Oh, because I hated the idea of your coming here at all; I thought that your presence here would spoil all my pleasant home life."

"Well, in that case, I had better take the next train back to London if my presence is *so* distasteful to you."

"I said *before* you came," Joey murmured. "You see," she went on, "I had always associated doctors with pill-taking, and as pills are always nasty——"

Digitized by Google

"Well, and now that you know me, do you still associate me with pills, nasty pills?"

"No," and she looked up at him merrily from under her long lashes, "I shall always associate you now with—cherries!"

"Ah, thank you, that's better! What book was that you were reading?" and he picked it up from the long grass where it had fallen when he had startled her by his unexpected appearance.

"'A Heart of Stone,' good gracious! how can your mother let you read such a book?"

"Mother never interferes with what I read."

"This is a highly improper book for a child like you to be reading."

"But I am not a child!" Joey indignantly protested.

"You know I am leaving here the day after to-morrow?" he asked abruptly.

"Very well, then, it is not the right sort of book for a young lady of your mature years."

"But, why not? It is so amusing. I have only just read the opening chapters, but it bids fair to be a delightful novel."

"Ah! you have only just begun it?"

"Yes," and she held out her hand for the book; "please give it back."

But with a quick movement he eluded her grasp and flung the offending volume right into the river Avon.

"Oh! how wicked of you! and it belongs to the Lending Library, too!"

"Never mind, I shall settle for it. Far better it should float down the Avon than poison the mind of a pure, innocent girl."

"I do not see what right you have to interfere with my reading," and she still looked at him with indignant eyes.

"No right at all, Miss Joey," he said gently, "except the righteous indignation of anyone who sees a noxious reptile ready to contaminate by its touch the fairest flower of a garden. Won't you forgive me?"

Joey was mollified by his pleading tones, and by the pretty compliments.

"Well, yes, I suppose I must forgive you. And, Dr. Rocklin, please, I want to ask you something," she said hesitatingly.

"Professionally?" he laughed, as he saw her move hastily back a few paces from him.

"No, of course not professionally. But, would you mind not telling mother and Marie-Louise how—I mean—where you found me in the orchard, because——"

"Yes, of course, I can quite understand. Your people do not approve of these bird-like flights of yours!"

"Dr. Rocklin, please, be generous. I may trust you not to betray me? You will say nothing?"

"Certainly!" and he felt elated at the mere thought of sharing this secret with her; it would make a bond of union between them.

They had by this time reached the lawn in front of the drawing-room windows, where Mrs. Braxton and Marie-Louise waited in state to receive their guest. To their amazement they now saw Joey calmly walking side by side and pleasantly chatting with the tall stranger who must be Doctor Rocklin.

As they neared the glass door opening out into the garden Joey hastily bid her new friend good-bye for the present.

Digitized by Google

"Please excuse me, Dr. Rocklin, but if mother sees me with my untidy hair I shall catch it."

The young man entered the room alone. Both ladies came forward eagerly to greet him. He made profuse apologies for his unofficial arrival by the back premises.

"But the fact is I lost my way, and wandered into your orchard without even knowing that I had reached the Gable House. There I had the good fortune to meet your daughter."

"Ah, yes, Josephine! She is such a child, you must have found her schoolgirl chatter very wearisome."

"No, indeed, I found Miss Joey's unsophisticated ways so fresh and delightful."

"Why, dear me, she is barely out of the schoolroom!"

Still, Dr. Rocklin perversely kept his eyes fixed on the door, and seemed but an indifferent listener to his two hostesses, who were, nevertheless, doing their level best to entertain him.

At last the door slid gently open, and Joey glided in; she had donned a white muslin frock, and had smoothed back her hair. He rose at once and courteously advanced a chair for her.

She glanced up at him gratefully, she was so unaccustomed to these attentions; no one ever seemed to pay heed to her. After tea, Dr. Rocklin was shown to his room, and then Marie-Louise was free to pour the vials of her wrath on her luckless younger sister.

* * * * *

Happy days now dawned for Joey, Dr. Rocklin sought her society on every possible pretext, it was continually—

"Miss Joey, would you mind taking me to Stonehenge?" "Could you spare the time to accompany me to Old Sarum?" "Would it be importuning you to ask you to take me on the river this afternoon?" and so on.

Marie-Louise levelled veiled sarcasms and biting sneers at her younger sister, but the young people were far too much absorbed in each other's society to pay much heed to her spiteful allusions.

His month's stay was quickly drawing to a close, and still he had not spoken to her, a sort of nervous dread held him back. "Suppose," he thought, "she does not reciprocate my love, and that in speaking out to her I lose her for ever!" True love is diffident, and tortures itself with these agonising perplexities as to the reciprocity of our love.

At last he felt he must speak; it was within two days of his leaving for London. They had wandered out immediately after supper at Gilbert Rocklin's wish, to gaze on Stonehenge by moonlight. It was indeed a grand sight to behold the silver orb shedding its glimmering radiance on these massive, century-old columns, the impenetrable mystery of which no human being can fathom.

Gilbert and Joey seated themselves on a fallen pillar, and discussed the ancient Druids, and how on this very stone altar, which still partly subsists, human victims had been slain to appease the wrath of the cruel deities who demanded that blood should flow to prove the zeal of their worshippers.

Suddenly Gilbert stopped talking, she looked up at him inquiringly.

"You know I am leaving the day after to-morrow?" he asked abruptly.

A swift look of pain shot across her face, but her innate womanly reserve was quick to warn her she must not show him how much she dreaded the approaching parting, and so she averted her face. He noticed the movement, did not guess the reason, and he sighed.

"I suppose my staying or going is of little import to you?"

Still she did not answer nor turn her face towards him.

"Well, Miss Joey, thanks to your pleasant companionship, my stay here has been a very happy one, a sort of bright oasis in my life which is like an arid desert of science and work."

"I have been happy, too, Dr. Rocklin, thanks to you," at last she ventured timidly to say. These few words seemed to give him sudden and desperate courage.

"I can't help it, Joey; don't be angry with me. I must speak out before I go. I know it is no use, but I love you."

She did not look at him even then, but softly on the night breeze were borne to him the astounding words—

"So do I!"

Quick as a flash of lightning he possessed himself of her hand.

"Well, you ought to be ashamed of yourself for not letting me know of this before!"

She looked at him demurely, and then a mischievous smile lit up her features.

"Not very likely I should! I was not aware that ladies proposed to gentlemen, except in leap year."

"But, Joey I have loved you from the very first moment I set eyes on you in the cherry-tree!"

"How strange, because I think I—well, I certainly liked you from the time I pelted you with cherries!"

"And I never suspected it!"

"Ah!" and she smiled with a superior air, "that's because until now you have addicted yourself far more to science than to love!"

"Well, I like the latter infinitely better than the former!"

"Do you really! Well, I must confess I appreciate cherries far more than pills!"

"Joey!"

"Yes?"

"I want to kiss you!"

"Oh, what a thing to suggest! Why, it would be profane to do so in these holy precincts. The souls of the Druids and of their slaughtered victims would rise from their long rest to anathematize us!"

But, in spite of her laughing protest Gilbert had his arm round her, and, drawing her towards him, imprinted a kiss on her unresisting lips.

And so, amidst the hoary vestiges of the Celtic religion, was enacted the old, old story which repeats itself over and over again through the passing centuries.

Lily Butler.

"There is always a way out of a scrape." "What's that?" "Letting your whiskers grow."

Baulso: "How did you manage to get through the crowd? I had to wait for an hour." Cumso: "I was smoking that cigar you gave me."

Lady: "Yes, Mr. Brown, I think poor pussy has had a stroke of apoplexy." Mr. Brown, M.R.C.V.S.: "M—m, I think not; looks more like a stroke of boot-jack."

"Did you know," said the man who was reading an article about the contraction of metals, "that a clock ticks faster in winter than summer?" "No, I never noticed that about a clock. But I know a gas-meter does."

"I want to look at some canes," said a magnificent young man to the shopman, "and I am in a hurry." "Yessir, yessir," responded the shopman, very much flusterted. "Here, James, show the gentleman some hurricanes."

An absent-minded man once received a letter. He knew the handwriting; he wanted to read it in haste. It was very dark, so he struck a light, tore a piece of paper, and lighted a candle. But the letter was gone—he had used it to light the candle.

C.: "I suppose Brown and his wife attracted the attention that newly-married couples usually do?" B.: "Oh, no! Brown married a widow, you know, and to avoid being suspected of being on a honeymoon trip she took one of her children with them."

Mrs. Dorcas: "I do think the *Ladies' Spare Time* is the best magazine I ever saw. In the current number it shows you how to make a lovely pair of slippers out of an old flannel shirt." Mrs. Newed: "But wouldn't that be difficult?" Mrs. Dorcas: "Not at all. If you make them too large you have only to soak them in water till they shrink to the proper size."

Digitized by Google

Last List Next Week.

BRAND NEW COMPETITION.

Cash Down. *Cash Down.* *Cash Down.*

1st Prize, £50. 2nd Prize, £25. 3rd Prize, £10.

And 25 Gramophones.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Below will be found six paragraphs containing the buried names of Railway Stations in the United Kingdom (or words that sound the same as the names). You must write in the spaces given the names of the Railway Stations so indicated.

No word or part of a word may be used more than once in making up the name of a Railway Station. In the event of the name of a Railway Station occurring more than once in a sentence, it should be underlined and written down each time. In case of more than one person finding the same number of words for each or any sentence, those words containing the largest number of letters will have preference. No name of a Railway Station may be composed of a single letter, either standing by itself or taken from any word in the sentences.

When you have discovered the names of Railway Stations in the sentences, underline (in ink) the words which go to make up the names (or words that sound the same as the names) and then on the line underneath each sentence write (in ink) the correct names of the Railway Stations to be found in each.

All the names will be found in the Index to Railway Stations in the January edition of Bradshaw's Guide. Should you be unable to obtain a copy of this Guide, a reprint of the Index will be sent to you for three penny stamps on application to *Bradshaw's Guide*, 59 Fleet Street, London, E.C.; or Room Eight, SHORT STORIES, 17 and 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

The names of the Railway Stations consist of one word or two or more consecutive words, or consecutive parts of one word, or two or more consecutive words.

The first prize of £50 will be given to the Competitor who fills in the greatest number of railway stations under the conditions stated. The second prize of £25 will go to the person who fills in the next greatest number, and the other prizes will be awarded in the order of merit.

When you have filled in all the names you can find, cut out the list below and keep it by you. Don't on any account send it to us until the closing date is announced in SHORT STORIES. The last list of sentences will appear next week.

In the event of a tie a further list (or, if necessary, several further lists) of sentences will be submitted to the tieing competitors until one wins the first prize outright.

<---CUT THROUGH HERE--->

EXAMPLE.

The oaks were swaying in the breeze, the cows were grazing peacefully, when out of the park tore a huge black bull.

The Oaks, Sway, Cowes, Grays, Park, Black Bull.

ELEVENTH LIST.

61. Your bay horse shows great promise, you'll surely win several prizes with him.

62. The whole prairie was covered with a bushy growth of small thorn and prickly pear trees, so that it was not easy to travel over it.

63. They patched up that old leak in the waste pipe; it had been a good deal of trouble, letting water fall through to the rooms below several times.

64. On our last cycle ride we did a record up and down hill, without having a spill. We were not long over it, either.

65. Don't stand on that bridge, it is likely to give way, the hurry and rush all day of trains have loosened the supports.

66. The Great North Road is one of the finest out of London. It runs through bigger cities than other main roads do.

NAME..... ADDRESS.....

.....

Digitized by Google

He Matched the Dog.

"How could Penelope marry that bowlegged man?" "She doesn't mind it, he matches her dachshund."

How Should He Know?

He: "I wouldn't cry, dear." She: "You don't kno what you would do if you had a new five-shilling handkerchief."

No Encouragement.

"What's worrying you, Harry dear?" "I'm afraid I'm not worthy of you, sweetheart." "Oh, well, keep on worrying."

He Put It Kindly.

Molly: "What did he mean by telling me I was as bright as the morning?" Dolly: "I suppose, dear, he meant—you were as plain as daylight."

It Was Much Brighter.

Rev. Dr. Thumper: "Does not married life seem brighter to you?" Mrs. Newbride: "Yes, rather. Our wedding presents included twenty-five lamps."

Papa's "Summary" Manner.

"You must not be discouraged, George," she said. "Papa may be abrupt, but his heart is as warm as a June day." "Yes," replied George, "I've noticed that his manner is very summary."

Evils Never Come Singly.

Mr. Bing: "It's remarkable, Miss Smith, how, when I follow you out of the ballroom, all the other men tag after us." Miss Smith: "Well, you know the old proverb—that evils never come singly."

How Theatres Should Be Arranged.

She: "Theatres ought to be arranged with the women all on one side, and the men on the other." He: "Why?" She: "So that when men go out between the acts they can tramp on each other's toes."

Had Seen it Before.

The Marquis (at the swellest ball in London): "Surely I have seen your beautiful face before, Miss Saintlou Cureall?" Miss Saintlou Cureall: "Mor'n likely. Pa used it on all his patent medicine ads., as 'After taking.'"

Feminine Amenities.

Clara: "I understand that Mr. Featherley paid me a very pretty compliment to-day?" Ethel: "Yes; what was it?" Clara: "He said that among the most beautiful young ladies at the party was Miss Clara Smith." Ethel (with a cough): "Yes, I noticed you among them."

Like Her Sister.

The addresses of a young man having been declined by a young lady, he paid court to her sister. "How much you resemble your sister," said he the evening of his first call. "You have the same hair, the same forehead, and the same eyes——" "And the same noes!" she added quickly.

Announcing the Engagement.

"How did Eleanor announce her engagement to the family?" "She just wiggled the finger that had on the diamond ring."

Still a Woman.

"So you discovered that female burglar in your house?" "Of course; she stepped on a baby's rubber doll, and thought it was a mouse."

Hadn't Far to Go.

Gerald: "If you don't marry me I shall go to the dogs." Geraldine: "You won't have to go far. There's one waiting for you at the gate."

How He'd Make a Name.

Jones: "I think your boy will become a very distinguished man if he lives long enough." "Yes? What do you think he will be distinguished for?" "Longevity—if he lives long enough."

A Fortune in his Grasp.

"Would you believe," said a thriftless young man to a friend, "that I had a fortune in my grasp last evening!" "How so?" asked the friend. "I shook hands with a girl whose fingers were covered with diamonds."

To Help the Sailors!

Mrs. Unsofist: "They say that the *Terrible* can steam twenty knots in an hour." Mr. Unsofist: "That's what she can do." Mrs. Unsofist: "I suppose they steam them so that the poor sailors can untie them more easily."

That Accounted for It.

Agent: "I think I can sell this place for you, but I can't get the £5,000 you ask. You'll have to take £4,998." Owner: "That's queer. Why should the extra £2 stand in the way?" Agent: "My customer is a woman."

Resigned to Fate.

"Come back!" Her cry smote the empty air and was lost. "Perhaps——" She bowed to the decree of Fate. "——it is better thus." Upon closer inspection she discovered that the umbrella he left was silk and not alpaca, after all.

His Chance.

Ethel: "They say that when De Broke proposed to Carrie, she tossed up a coin to decide whether or not she would accept him." Maud: "And the coin said no?" Ethel: "She never knew. Lord De Broke caught the coin when it was in the air, and rushed out with it."

He Wasn't Very Heartbroken.

A lovelorn swain, after conversing a while with the object of his affection on the interesting topic of matrimony, concluded at last with the emphatic question: "Will you have me?" "I am sorry to disappoint you," replied the lady, "and hope my refusal will not give pain; but I must answer 'no.'" "Well, well, that will do," said the philosophical lover; "and now suppose we change the subject."

Only His Bicycle Tyre.

She: "For the last four miles back I have been hearing soft, weird, far-away music. I wonder what it can be?" He: "It's my tyre leaking. It got flat before I started, and there was no pump to be had, so I got a blind accordion player to hitch it to his instrument with an old gas stove tube. He played 'Home, Sweet Home,' with variations, in it four times before it got hard. Now it's oozing out."

Plenty of Squeezing Then.

"Now, Algernon," said Miss Fussanfeather, as she was tightly held in the embrace of her *fiancé*, "they tell me that men get tired of squeezing after they are married. Will you promise me not to give it up after we are man and wife?" "Oh, I assure you it is not necessary to make any such promises," replied the young man. "I guarantee you'll have all the squeezing you want to do to get along on thirty shillings a week."

Google

The Affair at No. 24.

How a Family Quarrel Nearly Ended in a Tragedy.

THE family affair at No. 24 Bracewell Terrace might be now described as a comedy-drama, although it approached the domain of tragedy at one period of its development.

The details of the affair, and how it tested the love of Horace Maxwell for Violet Harrison, did not become public property all at once; the facts leaked out one day one by one and only recently have the occupants of the other villas in the Terrace fully understood what happened. Their enjoyment of details is, however, marred by the fact that the house has had a change of tenants in the meanwhile.

The position at No. 24 at the beginning of the affair was, it seems, well known to some of the residents in Bracewell Terrace, and the following conversation, carried on at No. 23 (which was exactly opposite), states it accurately.

"It may work well but I doubt it," remarked Mrs. Clarke to her friend from No. 11. "I remember a case like it, and there was trouble over that. So there will be here, you mark my words."

"I don't think that I properly understand it," rejoined Mrs. Thomas, a meek creature entirely under the influence of Mrs. Clarke.

"Oh, it's very simple," asserted the latter. She was quizzically dubbed "the detective of the street" by certain other residents. "This is how it stands:

"Mrs. Baynes, at No. 24, has a brother; his name is Horace Maxwell and he is between three and four years younger than she. He fell in love with a Miss Violet Harrison, whose father was reputed to be very well-to-do, brought his daughter up like a lady, and thought that Maxwell was not good enough for her. Maxwell made up his mind to get on in his profession and Violet was willing to wait.

"Then old Harrison died, and it turned out that Violet would have to earn her own living. Maxwell would have married her there and then, but it was hardly the correct thing to marry immediately on the death of her father.

"Maxwell would not let her go out as a governess or in any other capacity, so it was arranged—chiefly by him and Mr. Baynes, his brother-in law, that Violet should live with the Baynes. She could help in the housework and gain an insight into household management, of which she has very little knowledge, I assure you.

"That seems a very good idea on the surface, but the fact is"—here Mrs. Clarke assumed a confidential air and tone—"Mrs. Baynes does not think so much of Miss Harrison as her brother does and is cross because he did not bestow his attentions on another young lady, a friend of hers."

"I see," said Mrs. Thomas reflectively. "That means trouble, very likely. Yet Mrs. Baynes ought to be glad, for her baby must occupy a great deal of her attention—young babies always do!—and it should be a comfort to her to have someone there to look after the house. I don't think much of the servant they've got, and my girl tells me that the girl at 24 won't stop."

"My opinion of Miss Harrison, from the glimpse I caught of her, is that she wouldn't mind performing any duty and would take up the servant's work if the Baynes should be without a maid for a time, which is likely enough if their girl leaves. But if Mrs. Baynes has taken any sort of a dislike to her, of course, trouble is sure to arise!"

There was one point which Mrs. Clarke forgot or did not know; that was that Mr. Horace Maxwell would be compelled by circumstances of his profession to undertake trips to South Africa two or three times during the ensuing year and was to bid farewell to his sweetheart within a week, prior to starting on the first journey.

Violet Harrison had been in the house of her prospective relatives for nearly a fortnight when the above-mentioned conversation took place.

She had welcomed the suggestion when first made and she had entered the Baynes' household with the firm belief that she would be as happy there as it was possible for her to be anywhere, but during the last two days she had begun to have misgivings. She could not quite comprehend the attitude of Horace's sister; it puzzled and slightly worried her.

The sisterly sympathy which she had expected from Alice Baynes was not forthcoming to the anticipated extent; something in Alice's manner jarred upon Violet's sensitive feelings, yet it would have been very difficult for her to have defined her complaint against Alice.

"It is all my fancy, I expect," murmured poor Violet, trying to be cheerful even while her heart was heavy. "I won't say anything to Horace; that would look like ingratitude; but I wish he were not going away!"

Violet Harrison was a pretty girl and had a gentle disposition; she was the kind of girl who would make a perfect helpmeet for a strong man—she would comfort him, encourage him, and make him good; his home would be a place of happiness; but she herself was not fitted to do rough battles with less sensitive natures, and she wanted the strong arm of a man to shield her. Viewed from this standpoint, there could have been no better match than Horace and Violet.

"I shall be away about two months, dearest!" said Horace Maxwell, as he said "Good-bye" to Violet on the day before his departure. "I am thankful that you are under this roof, and I shall be more thankful when I can conduct you to our own house! My sister is one of the kindest women you could

Google

find ; my brother-in-law is a good fellow ; so you will be all right."

"I shall do my best to repay them for their kindness, Horace," said Violet simply, keeping back the tears with an effort. "Take care of yourself and come back soon—for my sake !"

Horace's answer need not be recorded ; let it be a secret between two loving hearts ! On the next day he left for Africa and Violet strove to banish all dismal thoughts and to believe that she was misjudging Alice.

Tom Baynes—good-hearted, easy-going fellow !—felt exceedingly comfortable for the next week ; things were going fairly well in his household, which had not been the case since the advent of the baby, and he was glad that Violet was there to help. He quite enjoyed himself in the evening and wondered why his energetic wife was not more contented than she appeared to be.

"It makes things easier for you, eh ?" he queried one evening when they were alone. "I am glad of that ! The baby worried you and the household worried you, and now—"

"And now it looks as if it would not be any better !" interposed Alice rather sharply.

She did not altogether appreciate the suggestion that she was having an easier time ; she liked to be regarded as an over-worked, over-worried woman, and she was losing this consolation.

"The girl has given notice, I am certain to be left alone for a time, as girls are so scarce, and Violet isn't much good. You see, she has never been trained in housework and—what are you laughing at ? I can tell you that housework cannot be performed properly unless you have been trained to it. My mother trained me !"

"Oh, we shall get over it !" said Tom cheerfully, anxious to change the subject. "I am sure that Violet will help, and you must wink at a few things ! Isn't she a quiet, inoffensive kind of girl ?"

Tom Baynes was beginning to wish that some of Violet's inoffensiveness could be transferred to his wife and some of her aggressiveness infused into Violet, just to equalise matters.

"She has a temper hidden away for use on occasions !" snapped Alice. "You may be sure of that !"

Things went on more or less satisfactorily till the general servant left, and then the baby was taken with some infantile ailment and the course of domestic economy did not run smooth. Violet had to do most of the household management, while Alice looked after the child and varied the monotony by grumbling at Violet's doings.

The baby's illness did not make Alice any better disposed towards her future sister-in-law. Irritated by the trouble, she vented her vexation and worry as a sort of safety valve on Violet. To do her justice, she did not comprehend the extent of her actions ; it was a case of want of thought quite as much as want of heart, but the results were the same.

The crisis was reached when Tom arrived home one evening and found Alice in the wildest excitement. The baby had been taken worse and the doctor had given his opinion to the effect that some kind of irritant poison had been imbibed by the little one. A trifling quantity of noxious fluid, or an apparently insignificant amount of powder mixed with its food, would be sufficient to do the mischief where so young a child was concerned.

"But the worst remains to be told," said Alice desperately. "Who gave the poisonous stuff to the little cherub ? Why, Violet !"

"Nonsense !" was all that Tom could gasp, so overwhelmed was he by this intelligence.

"I wish it *was* nonsense !" cried Alice in tears. "It is true enough ! I went into the kitchen after the doctor was gone, to tell her. She prepares the food. Of course, the doctor thinks that the irritant was in the food when bought, and I did not dare to undeceive him, for the credit of the family !

"Well, Violet was out in the garden. On the table stood some milk—just a drop that was left, and it tasted dreadful, almost enough to choke you. The smell was bad, too, but not the smell of ordinary sour milk. No ! I am convinced that something has been done !"

Tom Baynes looked grave ; the matter was assuming a serious aspect.

"Before we say anything, Alice, we must make inquiries !" he declared.

"I have already made inquiries !" said Mrs. Baynes decisively. "I called Mrs. Amer in to look after the baby and I went to the chemist. I remember that Violet went to the chemist last night, ostensibly to buy something for her headache, and I wanted to know what she bought.

"The chemist told me that he did not see the features of the girl very well, as he was shutting up and all his lights were out save one, and he didn't take particular notice, but he thought my description of Violet tallied. Naturally, I didn't say it was Violet to him !

"Well, she bought some poisonous stuff he sells for beetles and such like. I asked no more questions ; a small dose of that stuff, a grain or two, would be sufficient. Tom, that girl is bad, thoroughly bad ! I never trust such quiet, innocent people !' What are we to do with her ?"

"I'll have her in and question her, and if she cannot give a good account of herself, she must go !"

Tom Baynes' face became severe ; an attempt to injure a baby was a crime that merited heavy punishment.

"Violet, my wife has told you what the doctor said. You prepared the food. Have you any explanation to offer ?" inquired Tom, in coldly judicial tones.

Violet looked at him without comprehending. She turned her eyes to Alice and then back to Tom, and her lips parted as if to speak, evidently to ask what was meant. A sudden change came over her features as the force of the questions struck her ; she raised her hands as if to ward off a blow and cried :

"Oh, no, no ! Surely you do not think I did it ! Surely you do not wish to say that I wished to hurt the dear little thing !"

To an outsider, the ring of sincerity would have been recognised and her innocence practically established, but the parents were too interested to judge properly.

Alice was convinced ; Tom was exceedingly sorry that Violet should be implicated, but he felt that she had been animated by some motive, some feeling, which he could not understand, and his next utterance was more severe than the preceding.

"There are certain facts which require explanation," he went on, "and you should be able to explain them easily if there is nothing in them." He repeated what his wife had told him about the milk and the visit to the chemist.

"On your own statement," he continued, "the milk was perfectly good when you had it, yet there is no question that something had been done to it in the short space of time it was in this house. You bought beetle poison ?"

"I did not buy anything !" declared Violet with a sob. "I went out for the purpose, I know, but I thought the shop was shut, so I walked about for a minute or two and came back ! I did not do anything so wicked as to tamper with the baby's food ; why should I ?"

"I can't answer that question !" said Tom mournfully.

"It is all deceit !" cried Alice. "You have done wrong and now you must try to make out a good case for yourself ! The chemist is prepared to swear it was you, and the milk shall be analysed ! You will leave this house to-morrow !"

"You cannot charge me with acting so basely !" cried Violet, aroused now by the gravity of the charge. "There is no motive for me to act so, when you have been so good as to let me stay here. I will demand a proper investigation ! You shall not brand me as a criminal like this !"

She stood before them with flashing eyes and clenched hands. The trace of moisture in the lustrous eyes gave added power to their expression and the colour that suffused her cheeks made her look prettier than ever.

"It is wicked of you to condemn me like this !" she continued. "Oh, if Horace were here !"

After that outburst she broke down and sobbed. Tom whispered to his wife :

Digitized by Google

"It looks black against her," he said, "but it isn't absolutely proved, and Horace will think that we might have sifted the matter thoroughly before accusing her. Better let her keep in her own room till we have investigated matters. She insists on an investigation, so if we send her away, we shall only make the affair public. Keep her here and sift the whole thing more privately!"

He carried his point and Violet accepted the arrangement; she was determined not to rest under a cloud if she could do anything to clear herself.

The milk was submitted for analysis; the preliminary report was that there was undoubtedly some noxious chemical in it, but a proper examination would be necessary to prove what it was.

The position was decidedly awkward; Violet feigned illness and kept her room, and Alice managed to engage the services of a charwoman. Such a condition of affairs, however, was intolerable, and there is no telling what would have happened if Horace had not arrived unexpectedly, nearly a fortnight before the appointed time.

"I kept you in ignorance in order to surprise you all!" he cried in high glee. "What's the matter? Where is Violet? Is there anything wrong with her, Alice? Tell me, quick!"

Alice led him into the best room and told the whole story as coherently as she could, ending with: "The baby is getting over it!"

"Attempt to poison the baby—fiddlesticks! You are mad, both you and Tom!" cried Horace angrily. "I don't care if the evidence is as black as night," he added, as his sister interposed a remark about the weight of evidence. "I won't believe it!"

In spite of his outburst, Horace was painfully impressed; despite his unwillingness to believe the evidence, he was forced to admit, to himself, that the whole matter had an ugly appearance. Yet, Violet was incapable of it!

"Let me go into the kitchen and see for myself," he said. "Some whitewash fell off the ceiling or something natural happened!"

At that moment Tom came home and, after a few words, Horace went to the kitchen, followed by husband and wife.

"There!" said Alice, pointing to a cup on the table. "There stands a cup with some milk, just as it was *then*. This cup is in the same position as that one was! Now——"

She began to cough, as did Tom and Horace.

"That stupid woman has pulled the damper out, and the coke fumes are coming into the kitchen!" said Tom angrily.

"Violet made that mistake once or twice," said Alice. "Coke burns well in that grate if you manipulate the dampers, and it isn't nearly so expensive as burning coals there."

Horace was looking at the grate meditatively. Then he went to the cup of milk, as an idea struck him, and sipped it.

"Taste that!" he cried. "Isn't that the same poison as you found in the other?"

"Yes!" returned Alice, looking at his searching eyes with a chill at her heart.

"Yes," said Horace bitterly. "You were so positive that you almost made me doubt the sweet girl's innocence! It's all as easy to explain as A. B. C.! The fumes of the coke have spread about the room and have impregnated the milk. Milk will take up vapours and infection more quickly than anything, and, of course, there is enough poison in those fumes to upset a child who took that milk made up into food!"

"Where is Violet?" was Horace's next remark.

He strode from the kitchen in time to catch her as she ran down the stairs, slipping in her eagerness to get to him as soon as she caught the sound of his voice.

It will be well to draw a veil over the two scenes—the happiness and reunion of two lovers, and the spectacle of Mr. and Mrs. Baynes making their apologies.

It was fortunate that Violet was a sweet, forgiving girl and that Horace was too pleased at the prospect of not having to go away on any more trips to South Africa.

The family affair had taught Alice a lesson; she insisted on Violet remaining with them that she might atone for her harshness, and she did her utmost for the girl till the time came for Horace to claim her as his bride. **F. Brewster.**

MOSELEYS FOOD

"MADE IN A MINUTE."

Moseleys Food is scientifically prepared *in vacuo* from selected cereals by a new process during which the starch is converted into a readily digestible and soluble product.

It possesses remarkable recuperative properties most fully demonstrated when there is difficulty in administering or retaining nourishment.

Preventing constipation without causing diarrhœa, Moseleys Food is an excellent substitute for Mother's Milk and may safely be given from birth.

It is neither malted nor peptonised and unlike many cereal foods will not create a tendency to rickets but can be used with marked benefit for that complaint.

Reference to Medical Men if desired.

SAMPLE 6D. TIN FREE ON APPLICATION.

MOSELEYS FOOD Ltd., Sample Dept., Stockport.

TWO IS COMPANY.

The Story of a Plucky Girl's Love Affair.

The sun was sinking slowly in the western sky, leaving behind it a glory which transformed the earth.

A girl sat alone on a sand dune out of sight and sound of hotels and humanity.

Clasping her knees with her slim, brown hands, she gazed seaward with rapt, dreamy eyes, feeling rather than seeing the beauty of the scene.

Behind her lay the bay, a gleaming, golden thread, bordered by long stretches of marshes which gave out a sweet, dank odour.

Before her the breakers rose and fell with a dull thud and roar, and far out as eye could reach stretched the broad Atlantic, glowing with the splendid opalescent lights of sunset.

"Heavenly," said the girl to herself. And then, aloud, "I wish I could have the Gorgon's head for just about five minutes with eyes before and behind."

"What a cruel wish, Miss Allen," answered a voice not five feet distant. "I have been standing here transfixed by the brilliancy of your hair and the picture you form against that grey background. Would you have me stand for ever?"

"Sit down, Mr. Franklin, and stop casting reflections on my hair; it isn't kind. Besides, it isn't half so red as the bridge of your nose."

"It is the sun which casts reflections, not I, Miss Allen. But I am afraid one is company and two a crowd."

"Not at all," said the girl cordially. "I put off sentimentality with my teens. Besides, I love mankind too much to send you away," she added archly.

"I see you don't forget old haunts, Miss Allen, when putting away childish things," he said as he dropped down on the sand beside her.

"No, nor old friends," she answered, with a note of affection in her voice. "Tell me," she went on, "what have you been doing since we parted three years ago?"

"Ranching, in the first place, and getting back my strength, in the second. Ah! it is a glorious life, Miss Allen; the finest in the world."

"That is what you said about painting and Paris, if I remember rightly," she said quizzically. "Have you forgotten our talk on this very spot the day before you left that summer?"

"Never," he said; "nor you, nor anything pertaining to that miserable, delightful summer. How good you were to a cranky old invalid! By Jove! what a sweet little thing you were, anyway!"

"That was three years ago, Mr. Franklin. I was but a child," she said, with assumed dignity.

"Let me see, you were eighteen then. I shouldn't call you decrepit even now. But tell me about yourself. What have you been doing?"

"Nothing interesting; just living and learning," answered the girl, pushing back her red-gold hair.

"Indeed, is that all?" the man asked teasingly. "Mabel, does that ring mean anything?" he asked suddenly, as he caught a glimpse of diamonds on her hand.

"A great deal," she said, mischievously.

"Mabel, you are not—? Please explain yourself," he begged.

"It means," said the girl, "self-denial amounting to poverty. It means worry amounting to brain fever and three wrinkles. It means effort amounting to hard work but happiness, and it means money amounting to fifty pounds."

"Tell me about it?" urged Franklin.

"Well," began Mabel, "once upon a time there was a girl who had a fairy godmother in the shape of a great-aunt. This aunt made the girl many beautiful presents. She then lent her a valuable ring and told her to be very careful with it.

"The girl went to the seaside one summer and gave it to her young cousin to take care of one day when she went in bathing. When she asked him for it, it was gone and, although they searched diligently for it for days, it was never found. Of course, the girl felt that she must replace it, and she did.

"My aunt never suspected for this ring is exactly like the other, and I never told her about it until it was all paid for. Mother found it out sooner and wanted to help me, but I wouldn't let her."

"But, my child, how did you ever save up fifty pounds?" asked Franklin, knowing Mabel to be a little spendthrift.

"Of course, I couldn't take it out of my allowance, for that was spent. One must dress, you know," she said, looking down at her pretty, flimsy gown.

"Go on; I am absorbed," urged Franklin.

"At first I thought of a dancing class, for it was the only thing I could do."

"Except swim," put in Franklin.

"I wrote invitations by the dozen," went on Mabel, "but each child had some excuse. They either belonged to other classes or were too busy. I did finally get about a dozen, however, and we had great fun over it.

"Arthur played the violin and Nan played the piano. We took up the drawing-room carpet and cleared out most of the furniture so there was plenty of room. It kept things pretty lively and did us all lots of good. Mother would always come and give us some sort of refreshment, and the boys loved it. When we stopped I had earned twenty pounds."

"Capital!" applauded Franklin, watching the colour come and go in the face beside him.

"After that I plunged into all sorts of things. Fancy-work first, but it was out of season. Then picture-frames and menu-cards, which sold very slowly. They brought me in about five pounds."

"Go on, please," said Franklin, as the girl paused.

"Now comes the sad part of the story. I turned literary and wrote stories galore; wrote about all the sad things and all the funny things that I had ever heard. I pored over encyclopedias and books of travel for local colouring.

"I searched through old newspapers for thrilling and exciting incidents. I spent all my substance in stamps and paper and I received each story back about a week after I had sent it, with the editor's thanks."

Franklin laughed until the tears came to his eyes.

"I am sure, if you had told your stories, Mabel, instead of writing them, you would have made a small fortune," he said, when he could speak.

"It does seem funny now," admitted the girl, "but it wasn't a bit funny then. Sometimes I would give up in

Google

despair, go to my room and—well, never mind. You're not a bit sympathetic."

"But I am, dear," he said, taking one of her hands and looking down into her saucy face. "I was thinking how brave and plucky you were to stick it out. Aren't you going to finish?"

"Yes," she said shyly, withdrawing her hand, "for this story ended happily. One day I was calling on a friend who had a Swedish girl visiting her.

"The talk drifted to art work of different kinds and the Swedish girl asked me if I knew anything about poker work, I didn't, and on the impulse of the moment she offered to teach me. I started the next day and in a month under her tuition had done some really lovely things. She said I had good hands for it, and you know grandfather was a sculptor. It all worked out beautifully.

"A cousin of mine was going to Brighton and offered to take my work with her and exhibit it at one of the big hotels. In a fortnight they were sold and I had orders for more. After that it was smooth sailing."

Mabel paused and they sat in silence, looking out at sea. Against the horizon a ship was sweeping majestically southward with all sails set. The moon was beginning to assert her silvery sway as the pink glow faded and the spirit of peace seemed to move upon the waters.

In the sweet beauty of the evening the two seemed to come closer together and then the girl began to speak again.

"I think it was all meant for my good. I used to be so restless before when I had nothing to do. Last winter I felt that I had a purpose in life. Don't think I advocate the new woman: but I do think we would all be better and happier if we had something definite and positive to do."

"Yes," agreed Franklin, "and that since you have been talking I have discovered your true vocation. It is myself. I need you. Would you, could you take me up, make a home for a lonely man, be the light of his eyes, the satisfaction of his heart?"

His voice was very tender, and as he leant over and looked into Mabel's face, she thought him the most irresistible lover in the world.

"You cannot be in earnest," she managed to say.

"More than I have ever been in my life, Mab. It is not a new thought. Three years ago, when you were the merriest, happiest child in the world, I began to dream of it. I believed myself to be a hopeless invalid, but the hope of coming back to you has been before me and I believe has helped to make me strong. Mab, you must, you shall love me!" and he caught her up in his arms.

"I do, I do," said a muffled voice from his breast.

"I see two's company and fwee is a cwowd," piped a small voice from behind, "but muvver says come home to supper. It's nearly over."

M. T. Wilkins.

Edith: "Oh, Ethel, what shall I do? Jack says he supposes it's all over between us, and that he'll send my presents back." Ethel (experienced): "Tell him to bring them."

"It is very kind of you, madam," said the tramp, "to give me such a splendid dinner." "Don't mention it, you poor man," said the kind-hearted woman. "But I will repay you," said the tramp gratefully. "I'll tell all my pals that you are a flinty-hearted termagant that ain't never known how to cook nothin' decent, so's they'll give your house the go-by and won't never bother you."

MUSIC FREE.

12 New Songs, Piano or Violin Pieces, free on approval, at wholesale prices. State kind required, and if songs, for what voice. N.B.—Agents wanted for our Tested Pianos and Organs. "Piano and Music Buyer's Guide," post free.

TURNER'S WHOLESALE MUSIC STORES, London Rd., Preston.

BORAX

Starch Glaze.

Starched Articles

are wonderfully improved in appearance if a pinch of Borax Starch Glaze is in the starch. It imparts a lustrous gloss and a flexible stiffness that no starch of itself can give. It makes linen, laces, and muslins look like new. It prevents the iron sticking, and saves all that wearisome and excessive ironing which discolours and wears the articles. With it any home laundress can obtain the finest laundry finish in an easy and pleasant manner. Without it—no matter what starch is used—disappointment is certain.

Sold in 1d. packets at all Grocers, Oilmen, and stores.

Facsimile Packet

FREE SAMPLE PACKET & SOME NOVELTIES if you name this Paper and your Grocer.

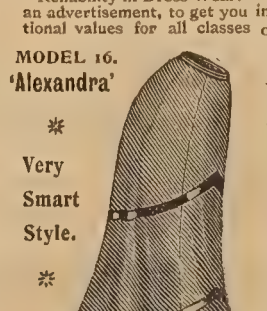
By Special Appointment — Makers to the King.

The Patent Borax Co. Ltd., Birmingham

A GRAND BARGAIN

Our goods always come up to what we say about them, and sometimes more. Opinions differ on most things, but all who deal with us agree that for downright good value we cannot be equalled. All our energies—all our facilities—all our advantages, are turned to your profit. We are universally known as the house for "Reliability in Dress Wear." For a short period, as an advertisement, to get you interested in our exceptional values for all classes of goods, we make this special Bargain Offer.

MODEL 16.
'Alexandra'
*
Very Smart Style.
*



Very Stylish, Latest Fashion, Tailor-Made Dress Skirt (as Illustration) for the Marvellously Low Sum of

3/6 each, or **2** for **6/9**

Postage 5d. each extra.

Made of our "Specialité" Unspottable Serge, trimmed with four rows of Extra Quality, Silk-Finished Braid; Perfect Fitting, with Pleated Back, and very full flounce for ease in walking. Inside extra well finished. Cannot be excelled at the usual retail stores at less than DOUBLE THE PRICE. State size of waist, and front length of skirt, when ordering. Over 28in. waist 6d. extra.

BODICE LENGTH TO MATCH, 2/-

Write to-day for Illustrated Bargain Catalogue.

T. & J. ROBERTS, The Great Warehousemen, Moorhead, SHEFFIELD.

Digitized by Google

Last Instalment.

HELD APART.

The Story of a Strange Double Fraud and its Influence upon some Young Hearts, a Great Name, and a Famous Fortune.

By R. NORMAN SILVER, author of "The Golden Dwarf," "The Daughter of Mystery," etc.

CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO.

"What Could We Prove?"

Adeline, Lady Tarleton, was dead—dead suddenly and horribly. A maid had entered her boudoir upon some errand and found her, face downward, on the floor. When the startled servant raised the prostrate form and beheld the features of the dead woman, she shrieked and ran. The odour of almonds was in the air, and prussic acid, though a swift, is not a merciful poison.

Edward Stormont, hastily summoned to his sister-in-law's room, bent over her for a moment, and then rose. He had seen death too often not to recognise it.

The small phial from which she had taken the drug lay at his feet. Near was a sheet of paper, written upon. He picked it up. It was not in the dead woman's handwriting, but a bolder and more masculine one. Its first words riveted the explorer's attention. It was plainly a letter, and ran:

"My Lady,—*I've done the job, as agreed—how you will soon hear—and am off. This time the girl is done for and no spoof about it. But you'd best look out for yourself. That newspaper fellow has put two and two together and has as good as tried to have me arrested. Luckily that fool of a promoted bobby who's been hanging round was too thick to see it and I slipped through.*

By the bye, J. thinks I did for Hannah, and, what is worse, has twigged that there is something rummy behind the girl, whose existence he has somehow tumbled to. He's a smart hand, but do you make no mistake—if they come on me about H., I shall tell them who—I'll bet a thousand—did the trick. It didn't take me long to guess, once I had time to think things over. But you'd done me no great harm in stopping the old cat's breath—she was getting to be a drag on me—and I knew I could make you part just the same. Besides, I could have proved nothing about Hannah, you'd been too clever, and I didn't want to frighten you to no purpose.

Burn this. You shall hear from me later where to send the balance of the cash, so no more at present from—

"You Know Who."

Edward Stormont concealed the letter in his hand—it had stricken him with a horrid chill. A cluster of curious servants were whispering at the door—he sent one of them with a message to Paul Jerome, and, closing the door, covered the dead woman's face and lowered the blinds.

The war-correspondent came in quietly, perceiving, without astonishment, the grim tragedy that had taken place. The footman's outcry and blanched visage had prepared him for the worst.

The explorer gave him the letter. Paul Jerome read it deliberately. Then he sorted out a folded sheet from his pocket-book, opened it, knelt down by the still form on the floor and studied the fingers of one hand. He was making a cool comparison.

"Yes," he said, "it is best as it is, Stormont. I myself had put Ussher upon a clue which might ultimately have enabled him to hunt her down to a fate worse even than this. Needless to say, I did not anticipate that result."

He showed the explorer the finger-prints and told him all. Edward Stormont bent his head comprehendingly.

"Davenal was her maid," he observed, "at the time of Moira's supposed death. Heaven knows what happened then, but it is evident that Davenal knew enough to blackmail her Doubtless the woman's exactions led to her fate. Adeline must have grown desperate, as, now, confronted by possible, if not probable exposure, she must have grown terrified."

He re-read the letter. "'This time the girl is done for and no spoof about it,'" he repeated; "strange! Was she herself cheated by her assistants and the child preserved without her knowledge and consent? It is not impossible. And then Hannah Davenal's death may have been, in reality, the penalty of her deception."

The explorer drew out a match-case and lit a corner of the ex-steward's letter. It burnt steadily.

"No one must ever know," he said; "think of Irene."

The war-correspondent shivered.

"You are right," he answered, and together they watched the blazing document. When it was all consumed Edward Stormont dropped it on to the hearth and ground the ashes to powder with his foot.

"Will that avail to conceal anything?" asked Jerome, gloomily. "What of Hartigan?—he may be caught, and, not being actually a murderer, will probably elect to speak. Besides, will you not have to thrash out the question of Moira's identity? We seem to have taken it as demonstrated that she is your daughter, and, indeed, the circumstantial evidence is almost conclusive. But if she were put out of the way in order that your wife's fortune might pass, at your death, to Lady Tarleton, that object has been legally effected. Irene is now your heir; to make Moira so, you will have to reveal all."

Edward Stormont brooded over the problem. Then a light broke in upon his sombre visage.

"Guy loves her," he said, "and you love Irene. Let things be as Fate has made them. The dead past shall bury its dead."

"But——" began the war-correspondent. The explorer checked him.

"What could we prove at best?" he asked, "would not the law scoff at our fantastic tale of an empty coffin and a dead child that did not die. No. let well alone, when I die you will be the husband of a wealthy woman, Guy and Moira will have plenty with the Vanbrugh rent-roll and my private savings. I shall know myself, if few others do, the richer by a daughter, and Irene will be able to weep innocently for her mother."

He put away his match-case.

"Come," he added, "let the law don its spectacles and see what it can see. We will leave ourselves in Mr. Ussher's hands."

Despite the tragedy of their surroundings, Paul Jerome's lip twitched. The half-formed smile lost itself in a sigh and he went out of the room with the explorer.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE.

A Question of Secrecy.

"Thank you kindly, sir, 'tis well meant, but you'll let me say 'no' all the same. I'm not a poor man, sir, if I were, I've given you my word to be silent, and anyone in Groudle—man, woman, or child—will tell you that John Davenal's word can be trusted. And I'd rather there was no mention of money between *us*."

The speaker laid a slight but unmistakable emphasis on the

(*Concluded on page 734.*)

Digitized by Google

ALFOSCO REG.

Call or Write.

Allen Foster & Co

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS

47 GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

Call or Write

ALFOSCO REG.

BUY DIRECT AT FIRST COST FROM THE LEADING FIRM OF LONDON MANUFACTURERS.

Design No. 898. 10/6

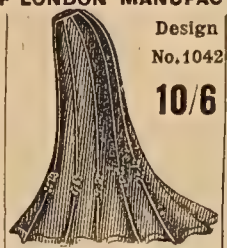
Skirt, 5/6

Design No 898. 10/6.

Eton Coat and Skirt Costume, made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'S **Specialite Serge, Venetian Cloth,** or new **Zibeline Cloth.** Colours: Grey, Black, Blue, Green, Navy, Oxford, Fawn, Brown, Purple, &c. Stylish Coat, fashionable sleeve, lined throughout. Trimmed tailor stitching and metal buttons. Fashionable cut skirt. Price complete only **10/6,** carriage 6d. Skirt alone **5/6,** carriage 5d extra. Send for one. Lace collar shown on this Costume 1/6½ ex.

This Costume is also made in Brown Holland for **8/11**; carriage 6d. extra.

WRITE FOR OUR **NEW SKETCH BOOK** AND **Catalogue of Bargains** Containing hundreds of Illustrations of Latest Novelties for the Summer Season, Sent with Patterns, post free. Call or write.



Design No. 1042. 10/6

Design No. 1042. 10/6. Latest Fashion in Costume Skirts. The new kilted Skirt with pleated seams, the top of each kilt being finished off with drop ornament. Made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s new Zibeline Cloth or in Specialite Serge or Venetian Cloth, all colours. This fashionable Skirt is lined throughout and well made Price only **10/6,** carriage 5d.

Design No. 456. 13/9.

Stylish Costume, Special value for 13/9. The bodice has a blouse front with tight-fitting back and is lined throughout; trimmed tucks, silk strappings and small buttons. Skirt also trimmed tucks, silk and buttons to match bodice. Made in ALLEN FOSTER & CO.'s new **Zibeline Cloth** (a material with a silky surface and carrying a splash effect), or in their world-renowned **Specialite Serge** or **Venetian Cloth,** all colours. Patterns post free. Price only **13/9**; sent carriage paid 6d. extra. In sending order please give bust measurement under arms, length of sleeve, size of waist, and length of skirt in front.

PATTERNS POST FREE

Design No. 456. 13/9

ALLEN FOSTER & CO.,

THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

47 GOLDEN LANE, BARBICAN, LONDON, E.C.

DO YOU WANT A GOOD CYCLE?

Write for my Lists. I deal only in the **Best Coventry made Cycles,** and by contracting for thousands annually, I **BUY CHEAPLY** and **SELL CHEAPLY.**

Premiers, Rovers Coventry Challenge, Triumphs, Swifts, Humbers, Centaurs, Raglans, Singers, etc,

The QUALITY is there. Get my prices, save money and ensure satisfaction.

A High-Grade **COVENTRY CYCLE** for **£6-0-0.**

Two Years' Guarantee. Easy Payments without publicity. Cycle sent on receipt of first payment. **EDWARD O'BRIEN,** The World's Largest Cycle Dealer, **COVENTRY.**

ESTABLISHED 1851.

BIRKBECK BANK,

Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane, London

2½% DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS **2½%** repayable on demand.

The BIRKBECK ALMANACK, with full particulars, post free.

C. A. RAVENSCROFT *Managing Director.*

Icilma

THE ONLY GUARANTEED AID TO BEAUTY.

Nature's remedy for Complexion and Skin Troubles, whether caused by heat, cold, age, irritations or accident. Send 1d. stamp for postage of Free Sample & Booklet with Guarantee.—ICILMA, (Dept. 127) 142 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.

30/- REAL SILVER KEYLESS WATCH

for **11/6** only. **1/6** Deposit secures it.

Simply send your full name and address and enclose **1/6** P.O., also three penny stamps for postage, to secure one of these marvellous bargains; you can pay the balance by small instalments of **1/-** weekly.

LADIES' or GENT'S

Real silver government stamped ¾ plate jewelled movement, **1/-** discount for full cash with order. Postage abroad **1/-** extra.

H. STANLEY & Co. (Dept. 12)
Bankrupt Stock Buyers,
284 BRIXTON ROAD, LONDON, S.W

ZOX for Neuralgia at Any Time.

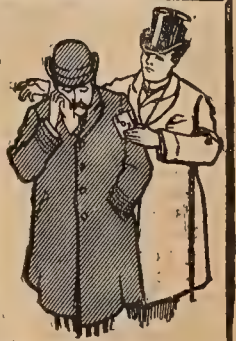
GIVES INSTANT RELIEF TO HEADACHE, TOOTHACHE, NERVE PAINS

Any Sufferer Sending Stamped Addressed Envelope May Try Zox FREE.

Neuralgia is a Disease of the Nerves, and most commonly attacks the nerves of the face. Its presence is announced by the most piercing darting pains, recurring in paroxysms, followed with brief intervals of relief; but hardly a moment elapses after a lacerating pain darts along the course of the affected nerve ere another shoots forth, inflicting pain equally distressing to the patient. The annexed cut presents in the prominent lines the nerves of the fifth branch, which are most liable to attacks of Neuralgia. All who suffer from this terrible pain, or from Headache, Toothache, or nerve pains generally, will be glad to know of ZOX, a Simple, Safe and easy Remedy certified free from injurious substance by no less an authority than Dr. A. B. Griffiths, F.R.S. The Proprietors offer to send Two Free Sample Powders to any reader of "Short Stories," who will send them a stamped addressed envelope.

ZOX is sold by Chemists, &c., at 1s. and 2s 6d. per box, or can be had post free from

THE ZOX COMPANY, 11 Hatton Garden, London, E.C.



"In pain? Try ZOX."

last syllable. Edward Stormont leant forward in the chair that faced the diver's—for John Davenal, no longer confined to his bed, sat by the sunny window of his room.

"You're right, Davenal," he said, frankly, "and I beg your pardon for thinking that, by making it your interest to keep it, I could add an iota to the value of your simple word. But, you see, I am quite a stranger to you, or I should have known better. Strange that we should be strangers, you and I—I whose blood runs in Moira's veins, you whom she has called 'father' for sixteen years."

John Davenal flushed. "It was a sweet lie in my ears, sir," he answered, "and, after all, I thought her my own flesh and blood, as you may say, believing her Hannah's child. But it seems wicked now, sir, that she should have been like my own child all those years while you, her true father, should have been wandering up and down in the earth, for want of just such an innocent life to cherish. And it's a sore shame to me, to think of my own sister's sin against you."

The explorer's face darkened. "No more of that, Davenal," he said; "quite possibly Moira owes her preservation to your sister and this fellow Hartigan."

"Like enough, sir," agreed the diver, "and though it can have been but for their own evil purposes, it makes it less awful to think of. But Hannah must have been a terrible woman, sir. However did she manage to keep the poor child fed and quieted while it was supposed to be lying dead, how did she contrive that it should have air when it was closed in that wooden shell and leaden casket, before she and Dennis, as they must have done, got it out and brought it to me?"

"It was not impossible," replied the explorer, rising; "some powerful sedative, daringly administered, and a cool, resourceful mind, were all that was necessary. The leaden casket is most ingeniously pierced with holes and no doubt the wooden shell was too. They must have carried off the latter with the child, wrapped up, I suppose, parcel-fashion. The child would be safer so, under the influence of the narcotic."

"Aye, sir," assented John Davenal, "and that was how it came to be flung into the Bay from off the breakwater, to lie there till, as I surmise, sir, Sir Guy's yacht, settling, broke it up and cut the plate in half so queerly. If it hadn't been for that plate, Moira might never have known another father than me."

The explorer bent over the diver. "Do you regret it, my poor friend?" he asked.

John Davenal started at the kindly expression.

"No, sir," he said; "it is better so—for Sir Guy and her. But I'm sorry she isn't going to have her rights in law—it seems a sort of injustice to the little lass."

Edward Stormont changed the subject hastily. "Not it," he retorted; "and besides, I have your promise, remember."

"Yes, sir," was the answer, "you have, and I'll keep it, safe and sound. And, after all, as you say, sir, there is the other poor young creature to be thought of, especially now that her ladyship has committed suicide. Then people do talk terrible, and mayhap the law wouldn't be satisfied in the end."

"That is just the position," said the explorer, evasively; "and now, if you will let me, Davenal, I am going to run away. I have still many sad things to do and to endure before the grave can close over one who has wrought both you and me great and lasting wrong. But enough of that; a day will come when we shall smoke a lonely pipe up at the Tower and listen to the echoes of wedding bells."

"Aye," replied the diver, rousing into cheerfulness; "love can drown a heap of unhappiness when it comes to its own."

"Yes," said Edward Stormont, bitterly, "if only the heart be young, Davenal. But when hearts are old they must sit down as best they may with their sorrow and loneliness. Nor Time nor Love can give me back those sixteen stolen years of Moira's girlish life. But a truce to our jealousies. I am tiring you and up at the Tower Irene will be waiting for Moira."

He opened the door of the diver's bedroom and called:

"Moira," he said, "we must be going off. Come and say 'Good-bye' to my hated rival."

There was a quick step on the stair and Moira ran up and into the room. The two men looked at her with a passion of suppressed tenderness in their bearing. She went to the diver's side.

"I have been trying, for the twentieth time," she remarked, with a little sigh, "to explain to Kit without—without explaining. Have you finished your talk?"

"Yes," said the explorer, smiling; "it ended with the usual topic—our jealousy of each other."

Moira smiled, too, and then sighed again. Then she took a hand of each and put them to her lips.

"I am very rich," she answered, unsteadily; "what other girl in the world has two such fathers?"

The hands she had kissed met and clasped. There was a tear on the joined fingers—it had come straight from Moira's heart.

* * * * *

And Mr. Ussher? What did his stolid official mind make of the ravelled skein left to him by Lady Tarleton's suicide? Paul Jerome cannot be sure how far the detective succeeded in reading the riddle, for he himself was forced to adopt towards the former an attitude of determined, if skilful reticence, and he who denies confidences has but little chance of obtaining them.

A criminal trial might have done much to open the lips of both. But the astute Mr. Hartigan was not pursued with any real vigour; there was a singular poverty of evidence against him in respect of his crimes, both achieved and attempted.

Lady Tarleton lies in the Lennox mausoleum, her darling object, after all, accomplished, for the Lennox fortune, in due time, will go past its rightful owner to enrich the daughter of a murderess. Well for Irene that she does not know, well for Paul Jerome that his ingenuity is able to cope, in some degree, with Irene's curiosity.

Part of the truth Irene had to be told, part her own quick wits discerned. But she does not speak of her mother, even to her husband; she guesses that the unfathomed past holds for her as much of terror as of mystery.

Yet she is happy, happy in her friendship with Guy and Moira, happy in her husband and her children. Jerome and she have built a dainty modern bungalow on the hill below the Tower—the great old gloomy place could never have been a home for them, and Irene, at least, shunned it with a nervous dread.

By now their new dwelling has ripened its red walls and gabled roofs in the sun and the sea air of Groudle Bay. When Edward Stormont is not to be found there he must be sought for at the Close, whither the years have brought a second Edward and a little maid with her mother's red-gold hair and a pair of limpid, steel-grey eyes. As they look up into Edward Stormont's something flutters at his heart. For the eyes of the little maiden are the eyes of his long-dead wife.

THE END.

A USEFUL BOOK.

POULTRY KEEPING

And How to Make it Pay.

By F. E. WILSON,

Contributor to "Poultry," etc., etc. Price 1s.; post free 1s. 2d.

Some of the nineteen chapters are:

Chap. I. Making a start—Number of birds to begin with, etc. Chap. II. Natural and artificial hatching—Setting a hen—How to test eggs, etc. Chap. III. The rearing and management of chickens. Chap. IV. Houses and runs—The kind of house wanted, etc. Chap. V. Foods and feeding—Feeding in summer, winter, etc. Chap. VI. Poultry for profit—Best egg-producing breeds, etc. Chap. VIII. Breeding for egg-production. Chap. IX. Poultry for exhibition. Chap. XVII. Ducks—Duck-rearing a profitable industry, etc., etc.

ORDER FORM. S.S.

To Book Publisher,

17 Henrietta Street, W.C.

Please send me a copy of "Poultry Keeping," for which I inclose the sum of 1s. 2d.

Name .....

Address .....

Digitized by Google

Headache

Kaputine cures the most obstinate Headache or Neuralgic Pains in ten minutes. Is the *only* preparation of its kind having the confidence and recommendation of Medical Men.

Kaputine
THE SAFE REMEDY

Dr. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., says:
There can be no hesitation on the part of anyone suffering from Neuralgic troubles to employ Kaputine—the *safe* remedy.

The only remedy of its kind used in British and Foreign Hospitals and Infirmaries.

Packets of 18 doses 1s.

KAPUTINE LTD., HUDDERSFIELD.

Neuralgia

A KODAK for 5/-

The No. 1 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 2½ by 2½ inches.

Despite its small size and low price the No. 1 BROWNIE is a thoroughly efficient little camera, and yields photographs as clear and distinct as possible. No dark room is needed for changing the films. In use the Brownie Kodak is simplicity itself.

THE NEW BROWNIE KODAK

The No. 2 . .

BROWNIE.

Gives Pictures 3¼ by 2½ inches.

MARVELLOUS VALUE PRICE **10/-** ONLY.

Finders for vertical and horizontal pictures. Everset time and instantaneous shutter. New and convenient spool-holding devices. Improved non-detachable winding key. Loaded and unloaded in daylight.

Ask for the Kodak Catalogue of all Photographic Dealers or of

KODAK LTD., 43 Clerkenwell Road, London, E.C.

Wholesale and Retail Branches: 96 Bold Street, Liverpool; 72-74 Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Retail Branches:* 59 Brompton Road, London, S.W.; 60 Cheapside, London, E.C.; 115 Oxford Street, London, W.; 171-173 Regent Street, London, W.; 40 West Strand, W.C.

To CURE Drunkards

MRS. GEO. FULLER, *who saved her husband.*

There is a cure for Drunkenness which has shed its radiance into thousands of hitherto desolate homes. It does its work so silently and surely that while the devoted wife, sister, or brother looks on, the drunkard is reclaimed, even against his will or without his knowledge or co-operation.

This famous remedy has guided many a young man to sobriety and into the high road of fortune, and has saved the father, the brother, and the son.

If you send name and address to the Ward Chemical Company, 51 Century House, Regent St., London, W., they will post enough of the remedy free to show how it is used in tea, coffee, or food.

Mrs. George Fuller says:—"*I am only too thankful my husband never now wishes for intoxicating liquor. I gave him Antidipso in his tea and coffee, and it has quite cured him.*" With the

FREE TRIAL

Packet will be sent books and testimonials from hundreds who have been cured, and everything needed to save those near and dear to you. Don't neglect to write to-day.

THE MOST NUTRITIOUS.

E.P.P.S'S

GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

COCOA

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

WHAT WE SAY WE DO, WE DO DO!

ARRESTED!

If your attention has been **arrested** by this, please send for our **latest Catalogue, No. 10** of bicycles, and **No. 9** of cyclists' accessories. Superior goods, **startling bargains.** **Symonds' London Stores, 124-128, City Road, London.** Also 246, Edgware Rd, W.; 47-49, Newington Butts, S.E.; and 14, Peter St., Manchester.

REAL HEALTH.

It's always a pleasure to meet a woman with a lovely complexion and bright spirits. But you cannot enjoy the best of health unless your system is in faultless order—every organ doing its appointed work and doing it regularly and well

TOWLE'S PILLS

have brought health to thousands of ailing women the wide world over, by relieving distressing complaints, and giving tone to the system generally. Avoid injurious imitations.

In Boxes, 1/1½, 2/9 and 4/6.

The 2/9 boxes contain three times the quantity of the 1/1½ size.)

of all Chemists, or Post Free on receipt of 15, 34, or 56 penny stamps or P.O.O. from the Sole Proprietors,

E. T. TOWLE & Co., Nottingham, Eng.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

GIVEN AWAY with this week's

HOME NOTES

(No. 490),

A Paper Pattern of this

BLOUSE.

Of all Bookstalls and Newsagents.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Digitized by Google

Conducted by CYNTHIA.

[In this page are answered any letters from readers dealing with affairs of the heart, tangles in domestic life, or points of etiquette. All communications must be addressed to Miss Cynthia Hamilton, c/o the Editor of SHORT STORIES.*]*

A Nervous Sweetheart.

"What are you to do," asks "Puzzled," "when a girl writes you the most affectionate letters, but who is silent when you meet, and never says a word about love? When I try to kiss her, she always tells me I mustn't, and in many other ways she will not even give me a chance. When she meets me, it is for such a very short time that we cannot talk about ourselves, and she always has other engagements. Do you think she really loves me!"

* * * * *

Probably she does love you, if she writes you the letters you mention. I expect she is a little bit afraid of showing her love for you when you meet, and perhaps is so inexperienced in men's ways that she does not know how to act. That would account for her conduct when with you.

* * * * *

You should be very backward in your attentions for awhile. When she does meet you, treat her just as an ordinary friend, and talk about ordinary subjects. You don't want to rush right into talk about love, as it seems to embarrass the girl. When you get thoroughly used to each other's society, you can make your own declarations, and by that time she will know her own mind about things. You have evidently been taking her too much by storm, and it has made her feel embarrassed.

❦❦❦

A Shop Assistant's Trouble.

"Alex" (Glasgow) is in perplexity. He is a shop assistant, and very much in love with a young lady. He, however, could not possibly marry her at present, as his salary is very small. Now a month or so ago her father died, and left the girl's mother and herself in very straitened circumstances. The only relief they could get would be to go to Canada where they have a brother who is doing well. But this would be a great blow to "Alex," who would thus be either compelled to marry the girl and share with her simple poverty, or to lose her perhaps altogether. How should he act?

* * * * *

There are two courses open for "Alex." Either he must take steps to at once improve his position at home, or find some means of accompanying the mother and daughter to Canada. In the first case, he had better make a clean breast of his position to his employers, asking them for a "rise." If they refuse, then he had better save, by hook or crook, enough money to emigrate to Canada. When there, he should have little difficulty of getting work where he could be near the girl.

* * * * *

As a Scotsman, I imagine his chances ought not to be bad in a country where there are so many of his fellow-countrymen, who are only too willing to help a brother Scot. If the brother of the girl is, as you say, doing well, perhaps he might be able to place something in your way. Certainly the experiment would be worth trying.

A Lorn Soldier.

"Sunny" (India).—Thanks for your letter, and the kind things you say about *Short Stories*, which I am glad to hear is read so much by your fellow soldiers. I can understand how much you wish to meet with a girl, but I cannot do what you ask. I advise you to send an advertisement, prepaid, to the matrimonial columns of one of the daily papers, either in India, or at home.

* * * * *

No doubt many girls would be willing to open correspondence with you, but it would be quite outside my province to introduce readers whom I do not know to each other. Failing that, why not invite one of your friends or relations at home to bring about the introduction? They know you personally, and would be better able to do so than a stranger.

❦❦❦

Boy and Girl Etiquette.

"If a boy, sitting in a tram, meets while there a girl of his acquaintance, should he pay for her fare when the conductor comes for the tickets?" This puzzles "Arthur," who says the question often arises, and he never quite knows what to do.

* * * * *

Unless, "Arthur," you have set out on the journey with the girl, it is no affair of yours to pay her fare. If she is a properly brought-up girl she would not let you do it. After all, if she is in the habit of travelling about, her parents will have given her the necessary money, and she ought not to expect you to spend your own, which is as precious to you as is hers to herself. On the other hand, if the girl is going anywhere with you, at your invitation, or is in your charge, then of course you will pay her fare.

❦❦❦

Does He Love Her?

"M. D. S." met a young man the other day to whom she took a great fancy. But she did not show it much at the time of meeting him, as he did not reveal himself entirely to her until they parted. On leaving each other, they arranged to meet again, and "M. D. S." wrote, suggesting an appointment to the man, who did not reply. She then wrote again with the same result. Should she write once more and express her feeling for him, or let the matter drop?

* * * * *

Give him one more chance, and if he does not reply then, you must be assured that he does not wish to resume your acquaintance. In that case, you had better let the matter drop, and forget him. Better end the little affair now in its earliest stages, than later on when the wrench would be harder to bear.

❦❦❦

A Country Mouse.

"Eva" is a country girl, who very rarely visits London. In a month's time, however, she will be passing through the city on the way to a friend living on the other side. Last year she met a man with whom she flirted a little. When parting, he said: "If ever you're in London, be sure to tell me, and we'll have a good time together." Should she ask the man to meet her as she passes through—she has no other friends in London—or would that course be unwise?

* * * * *

Certainly I don't think it would be wise for a girl who knows nothing of London, and who is on the way to visit friends, to arrange meetings with young men she only knows very slightly. But then, I do not know, either, what sort of girl you are, or what sort of man he is. All depends on the people themselves. If you were just passing through London, and knew exactly where you were bound, and the time you must be there, I should not think there would be any harm in his acting as your escort. But I would not recommend your placing yourself in his hands for "a good time," unless you thoroughly know London.

Cynthia

Printed by Horace Cox, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C., and published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Digitized by Google

FOR HER— AND FOR YOU.

A SURPRISE!

There is something *you* will like in The Lady's Magazine for June. We don't want to tell you all about it here, but we want you to get a copy of the June number, now on sale, and see for yourself what wonderful attractions can be obtained for sixpence.

Do not be satisfied until you have read every page.

We feel sure you won't be satisfied *then!*

You will want more, for The Lady's Magazine is so full of delightful surprises.

What are the attractions?

What are the surprises?

Ah, well!—we must not say too much.

A copy is awaiting you at the nearest bookstall.

Digitized by Google

Needs must where INDIGESTION drives.

You have to avoid some favourite dish, or you do not enjoy your food and have to be uncomfortably particular about your diet. **WHY?** Whether you know it or not you are suffering from **INDIGESTION.** Instead of your stomach being the minister of your body's needs, it is impeded in its action by dyspepsia, and you are being robbed of your nourishment, your sleep, your pleasure. Now, if you wish to save yourself from, perhaps, very serious illness you will seek the aid of

BEECHAM'S PILLS

and drive away the **INDIGESTION.**

A course of this famous remedy will, as certainly as water quenches thirst, impart new vigour to the Stomach and Digestive Organs. The Liver and Kidneys will be cleansed and regulated, the Blood purified, and general health soundly re-established.

BEECHAM'S PILLS have done this for many thousands of suffering and distressed people: Why should they not do as much for you?

BEECHAM'S PILLS
Cure Indigestion.

Sold everywhere in Boxes, price 1s. 1½d. (56 Pills), and 2s. 9d. (168 Pills.)

Digitized by Google